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HEMLOCK HANK, TOUGH AND TRUE; Or, THE SHADOW OF MOUNT KATAHDIN.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,

AUTHOR OF "MISSISSIPPI MOSE," "BUCK FARLEY," "BILL, THE BLIZZARD," ETC., ETC., ETC.



"JUMP, CHARLEY!" SHOUTED HANK, AND OVERBOARD HE WENT.

Hemlock Hank, TOUGH AND TRUE;

OR,

The Shadow of Mount Katahdin.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,

AUTHOR OF "LOGGER LEM," "FLUSH FRED,"
"MONTANA NAT," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE WILDERNESS.

"We will stop right here, Hank Ward, and pull up for the night."

"We will, will we? Who's captain o' this craft, I wanter know?"

The craft in question was a canoe, but a canoe of unusual build and style, being broader and shallower than canoes generally are, as well as much larger in every way.

It could have carried six people comfortably, or could float as many as could crowd into it.

Yet it was so light, not an ounce of superfluous timber entering into its structure, that two men could pick it up and carry it quite handily.

It was partly decked over at the bow and the stern—so called for the purpose of distinguishing one end from the other—and the spaces under the decking were used for the storage of provisions and other articles.

The outfit included a shelter-tent and a light lug sail, and the craft was provided with both setting-poles and paddles, the latter only being in use when we meet her, far up the Penobscot, in the early autumn.

The occupants and propellers of the canoe were the two men who had opened up a little controversy concerning a stopping-place.

The first speaker was a bright and cheery young fellow, lithe of form and active in his movements, with blue eyes, short but curly light hair, and a general expression of wide-awakeness.

He was neatly and somewhat stylishly attired in a sort of sportsman's suit of tweed, high boots, and a tasty slouched hat.

The other was a tall man of middle age, apparently strong and hardy, with dark but grizzled hair and beard, and weather-beaten face, hands that had evidently been well acquainted with hard work, and a frank, open countenance, full of truth and good nature.

His dress was a blue suit of coarse woolen, the upper portion being a short blouse well supplied with pockets, and the heavy trousers were thrust into stout boots of cowhide. His head covering was a fur cap, some the worse of wear.

He sat near the stern of the canoe, paddling slowly on the starboard side, while his companion at the bow paddled on the larboard side.

They were approaching a pretty formidable series of rapids, when the young man laid his paddle across the canoe, and declared for a halt.

When the other wanted to know who was captain of the craft, he half-turned around and smiled quizzically.

"As I am the owner," he answered, "I think I ought to be the captain."

"That's jest where you slip up. There's a sight o' difference between the owner of a ship and the captain. The owner may be the boss ashore, but the captain's the boss at sea."

"But suppose the owner is aboard."

"All the same. The captain's the captain for the v'y'ge, owner or no owner."

"Well, Mr. Hemlock Hank, I must say that you deserve the name they give you; for you are as tough as a hemlock knot, and as hard-headed as—"

"Never you mind how hard-headed I am, Charley Creed. Better look out that I don't git to be hard-hearted, too. I've got to be hard-headed, my boy. When I started with you on this cruise, I told your father—who is a gentleman, every inch of him—that I would bring you back safe, Providence permittin'."

"That's all right, Hank. But I am of age, and am able to take care of myself."

"Mebbe you are. You are a good lad, Charley, bright, smart, and with a heart that'll allus do to bet on; but I must say that for hard-headedness you beat the world. Sech a chap to butt his head ag'inst stun-walls, to fly off the handle generally, and to git into all sorts and sizes of scrapes, I never run across afore. You think that because you've been 'way out in the West, and among the wild Injuns, you know it all."

"I don't pretend, Hank, to know as much about these rivers and these woods as you do."

"Of course not. You'd be a fool if you did. But I am older than you, and I know as much about them as any white man knows, and for those reasons I am the boss of this expedishun."

"Well, I suppose you are."

"That is settled, then. Well, Charley, you had better paddle on your side, and send her in to the shore. This is where I meant to land;

but when you spoke up, and began to order things about in your lively way, I thought it best to let you know who is the captain of this craft."

It should be stated here that similar discussions had formerly arisen between those two canoeists, and that this was not the first time that the same question had been settled in the same way.

It did not seem to stay settled.

They pulled the canoe up on the shore, and prepared to camp.

The main feature of the camp was a big fire, partly for the purpose of cooking supper and partly to intimidate mosquitoes and other wild beasts.

Each took a share in preparing the meal, and both seemed to be equally adepts in the art of *al fresco* cooking.

Charley Creed made the coffee, and Hank Ward broiled on the glowing coals a partridge which they had shot that afternoon.

Their bread was ship's biscuit, moistened and flavored with the drippings from the broiling bird.

Each did his work admirably, and between them they picked every bone of the partridge, and drank all the coffee.

Appetite may be the best sauce for supper, but such a supper was not to be sneezed at.

Then came the soothing and meditative pipes, tranquilizing both, and putting them in the best possible humor.

It was dark, and they had not finished their smoke, when another boat came up the river, landing at their camp near the foot of the rapids.

This was a large skiff, well-loaded with provisions and other necessities for an expedition into the wilderness.

Its occupants were three men, all of whom joyfully recognized Hemlock Hank as they landed.

When they had pulled up their skiff he introduced them to his young companion.

They were well-known loggers, who were on their way to the head-waters of the river, to "prospect" for timber, preparatory to a winter's logging season.

The leader of the party was Zeb Carter, a tall and well-formed man, somewhat similar in general appearance to Hank Ward.

Next came Luke Schooley, acknowledged to be one of the best teamsters in the lumbering business.

He was a short and stout man, nearly as broad as he was long, whose fat face and twinkling eyes indicated an easy and jolly disposition.

The third one was Solomon Barnes, who also had his fame, as he was so tall that it was said that he never needed to climb a tree for the purpose of getting a view of a forest tract.

He was also remarkably lean, in every way a striking contrast to Luke Schooley, and his sharp and solemn countenance seemed to be incapable of expanding into a smile.

The new-comers speedily prepared and ate their evening meal.

Then they lighted their pipes, and sat down with the canoeists, to swap news and tell stories.

Gossiping lasted until a late hour, and when the voyagers at last laid down to rest they were soon sound asleep.

CHAPTER II.

CHARLEY'S PANTHER, AND HANK'S BEAR.

ALL slept soundly but Charley Creed.

It might have been the stories he had listened to that made him wakeful.

When he did fall asleep, his slumber was easily broken.

Toward morning it was broken short off by an unearthly screech or scream, which sounded as if it issued from directly over his shelter tent.

Instantly he was wide awake, with all his senses about him.

Surely the blood-curdling screech could be nothing less than what he had heard aforetime in the Western wilds—the yell of a prowling panther.

There was a good chance for him to prove his prowess and protect the camp from the fierce beast.

He grasped his rifle, and silently stole forth into the night air.

The darkness that was thick about him was but faintly lighted up by the smoldering remains of the big fire.

Hemlock Hank and the loggers were still sleeping as soundly as if nothing but the final trump of doom could awaken them.

As he straightened himself up near the fire, that wild and unearthly scream again smote his startled ears.

It seemed to come from the top of a pine tree under which his tent was stretched.

He looked quickly, and up there he saw, in a crotch of the tree, a pair of great, glaring eyes.

He also fancied that he also saw there the cat-like movements of a big body.

But there was no need of fancy; those wild, large eyes were sufficient to determine the character of the creature.

What could it be but a wildcat, crouched for a spring?

The young man raised his rifle to his shoulder, took a careful aim at the eyes or just below them, and fired.

The report of the rifle awoke the echoes of the forest, and the beast fell to the ground.

But it did not fall heavily, or with anything like a "sickening thud."

It came flopping and fluttering down, and reached the ground gently, not at all as a panther might have been expected to drop.

The report also awakened the four sleepers, who jumped up and ran to where the young man stood with his rifle, looking dazed and a little worried.

Hemlock Hank picked up the body of the nocturnal marauder, and brought it forward to the fire, where it was greeted with shouts of laughter.

It was an enormous owl.

"Big thing, Charley," said Hank. "Did the folks out West teach you to get up at night to shoot owls?"

"I thought it was a panther," muttered Charley Creed.

The next instant he repented of having made that statement, as it was received with shrieks of laughter.

To rise from sleep for the sake of killing an owl was bad enough; but to mistake an owl for a panther was too much.

"The infernal screech fooled me," he growled.

"That's so," said Hank. "'Tain't much to be wondered at, boys. The young chap has been out West among the wild Indians. Mebbe they don't have owls out there. The scritch of a big owl don't differ much from that of a wildcat, anyhow."

Solomon Barnes, the lanky logger, was the only one who had not laughed.

He looked at Charley Creed as sourly as if the young man had committed the unpardonable sin.

"It's the wu'st kind o' luck to shoot an owl," he solemnly declared.

"Jest so," remarked Luke Schooley. "If folks git to killin' owls, Sol, somebody may tumble you over one o' these nights."

They turned in again, and slept until the sun was up.

After breakfast in the morning they were in no hurry to get forward, but sat and smoked and gossiped for an hour or so.

"We came across a queer party down the river, Hank," remarked Zeb Carter.

"What sort of a party?"

"Not much of a party—only two men—but somethin' out of the way. Do you know Dick Ridsen?"

"Dick Ridsen? No. Who is he?"

"A Boston detective, who has been about Bangor some. I thought you might ha' met him."

"I ain't apt to come across that kind, Zeb."

"He was one of the party, and the other was an Injun—one o' those French Injuns—Awgoost, he called him. They were canoein' it up the river, stoppin' off here and there, and what do you think the detective was lookin' for?"

"Lumber-thievin', mebbe."

"Not a bit of it. He was huntin' a man. You remember Solon Marley, who lit out a few year ago. He was bookkeeper for Creed & Ralston, and 'twas said he got a power o' money by forgin' the firm's name, and ran away. He had a daughter, a mighty nice girl, who went with him, and nobody could find out what had become of them."

"Yes, I remember."

"That's the man Dick Ridsen is huntin', up here in the woods."

"He might as well hunt a needle in a haystack, I should say. Does he think he has a chance to find him?"

"So he says. He's got what he calls a clew, and he depends a good deal on the Injun. He asked me lots of questions about people and places up here."

"He did, hey? Well, Zeb, if he asks you where Solon Marley is, tell him you don't know."

"Of course I would, as that is the plain truth. Do you know?"

"Of course I don't; but I hope that man won't find him. Come, boys; let's be gittin' on."

Hemlock Hank and his companions had intended to lighten their canoe of its contents and make a portage around the rapids; but this plan was ridiculed by the loggers.

"Why don't you keep to the river and go up like a man?" demanded Zeb Carter.

"It would suit me well enough," replied Hank; "but Charley Creed is new to the business, and I guess he never tried to run a rapid."

Charley admitted that he had never made the attempt, but protested that he believed he could do the work as well as anybody, and that he would like nothing better than to learn.

"It ain't a hard thing to do when you get the hang of it," remarked Carter. "If you should make a miss of it, it would only be a wettin', and there ain't any owls about to bite the youngster."

Charley Creed had heard enough of the owl episode, and was anxious to do something to prove that he was not quite as green as his new friends seemed to suppose him to be.

So both the boats were shoved into the river, and it was arranged that the loggers should first ascend the rapids, so that Charley might watch them and see how they "did the trick."

The skiff was headed up-stream, and Sol Barnes took his position at the bow with a setting-pole, while Zeb Carter similarly propelled the craft at the stern.

Luke Schooley, acting as "live ballast," set in the middle, to throw his weight to one side or the other, if the skiff should be inclined to upset.

From below the task appeared to be a very difficult one, as the water poured down at an angle of forty-five degrees, and in some places at a yet greater angle.

The difficulty and danger were increased by the rocks that studded the channel, over and about which the torrent foamed and boiled, twisting and whirling so as to require the exercise of great strength and skill in the ascent.

But the stout and experienced loggers, planting their setting-poles firmly on the solid bottom of the river, sent their heavy skiff upward as if the labor were not straining their muscles and taxing their brains to the utmost.

Soon they had finished the ascent, and a shout from the head of the rapids proclaimed their success.

Then the canoeists started up.

Hemlock Hank thrust out his setting pole at the bow, and his young friend undertook to do similar work at the stern.

Charley had received careful instructions from the guide, and had profited by narrowly watching the actions of those who managed the skiff.

The canoe, also, was a light affair compared with the skiff, and consequently was more easily controlled.

So it went up fairly well, and Hank Ward had no complaint to make of the manner in which his young friend obeyed orders and managed his end of the craft.

They had got about half-way to the upper end of the rapids when the loud report of a rifle above them broke upon the air.

Coming, as it did, at a moment of stillness and intense occupation, it startled them both so that they nearly let the canoe swing around and upset.

But they quickly recovered themselves, and straightened up the light craft.

"What the deuce did that mean?" demanded Charley Creed.

"Some of those fellows' foolishness," answered Hank. "Never mind it, Charley, but keep the boat straight, and we'll be up there in a jiffy."

They had nearly finished the ascent when a shout reached them from up the river.

"Look out, Hank! Look out for the bear!"

The men in the skiff, paddling slowly up-stream after mounting the rapids, had seen a black bear which had started to swim across the river at that point.

As they had a rifle, they could not resist the temptation to take a shot at the beast.

Luke Schooley fired the rifle, and its report was what startled their friends below.

The bear was hit, but was more scared than hurt.

So badly was he frightened, that he swam away as fast as he could, apparently regardless of the direction he was taking.

Soon it was evident that he was bound to go over the rapids.

Then it was that Zeb Carter shouted to Hank to look out for the bear.

But how was he to look out for the bear?

From his position he could not see any bear, and he was justified in believing that his friends up there were trying to run a practical joke on him.

The upsetting of the canoe would of course be "nuts" for them.

A little more vigorous pushing with the setting-poles brought the canoe to the upper edge of the rapids.

Just then the bear appeared there, puffing and struggling, right at the head of the craft.

It offered him a refuge of which he at once availed himself with the utmost alacrity.

Seizing the prow with his paws, he proceeded to clamber in, nearly overturning the canoe with his weight and clumsy efforts.

Hank Ward saw that in another instant the bear would have him by the leg.

There was no weapon at hand with which he could defend himself, and there was necessity for immediate action.

Indeed, he was absolutely driven to the course that he took.

As the bear had taken possession of the boat, he must be left in possession.

"Jump, Charley!" shouted Hank, and overboard he went.

But Charley had no idea of jumping into the torrent.

The poet has said that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Charley Creed was no fool; but he did not

hesitate to undertake a task which even Hemlock Hank had ingloriously abandoned.

Dropping his setting-pole into the water, he picked up his paddle.

Aware of the efficacy of a blow on a bear's snout, if rightly delivered, he determined to attempt to expel the intruder.

He jumped, but not into the water.

Before the bear had fully drawn his big body up into the boat, he was struck a blow on the nose that nearly shivered the paddle.

Astonished and disgusted, Bruin dropped his hold, probably for the purpose of caressing his hurt nose with his paws, and was swept down the torrent, close on the heels of Hemlock Hank.

During the very brief space of time that this affair occupied, the canoe had been whirled around like lightning, and it would inevitably have been upset but for the prompt and able action of Charley Creed.

Happening to find himself at the upper end of the craft, he thrust his paddle into the water, and used it as a steering-oar with such good effect that the return voyage down the rapids was made swiftly and safely.

The canoe reached the foot almost simultaneously with Hank Ward and the bear.

The former, who did not see the canoe, and was only intent upon getting away from the bear, struck out for the shore.

The bear had been so tumbled about that he was apparently dazed and uncertain what to do.

Just then the canoe ranged up near him, and again offered him a refuge.

But Charley Creed was too quick for him.

As the young man was fully master of his own movements in the still water, he picked up his rifle, put it close to the bear's head, and sent the bullet through his eye into his brain.

That finished Master Bruin.

The loggers had landed with their skiff, and had hurried down the shore by the rapids to see the "fun."

When they got to the foot, Charley Creed had landed the canoe, and was endeavoring to bring in the carcass of the bear, with the help of his dripping comrade.

The story came out, and the young man was enthusiastically hailed as the hero of the occasion.

"You shall be the captain of the craft after this, Charley," remarked Hemlock Hank.

"No, Hank; you are the captain; but you will admit that I am a pretty fair sort of a crew."

"That beats gittin' up at night to shoot owls, by a long chalk," said Zeb Carter.

"Yes; but Hank's bear showed up better than my panther did."

CHAPTER III.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAKE.

A CAMP on the low shore of a beautiful lake under the shadow of Mount Katahdin.

A small camp—only a shelter-tent, a fire, a canoe at the beach, and two campers.

The two were Hemlock Hank and Charley Creed.

It was night, but yet early in the night, and the sky was covered with light clouds through which patches of silvery moonlight were faintly visible.

There was no breeze to stir the pine needles, or to waft away the resinous odors that made the mild air balmy.

Under the scattered clouds the lake was as smooth as a mirror, darkly quiet, and seeming to stretch away endlessly into the distance.

In its entire extent it was studded with islands, none of them large, but many close together in clumps, and all very beautiful in the daytime with their wealth of foliage tinted with the varied hues of early autumn.

The canoeists had finished their evening meal, and were seated under the trees at the shore, leading out on the lake as they smoked and conversed.

"It seems to me to be a strange thing, Hank," Charley was saying, "that a man should make a journey up here into the wilderness to find one who has been lost for two years."

"Don't you worry about that, my boy. He will never find the lost man."

"His chance must be a very small one. A man could hide here a lifetime, I should say, and defy the world to find him. But such a fellow as Dick Riden is said to be would hardly undertake the task unless he had some solid reason to hope for success. And even a hermit, Hank, would need ammunition and other supplies, which would be sure to bring him at some point indirectly in contact with civilization."

"I don't follow you easy, Charley, in that dictionary talk; but I guess you mean to say that somebody would be apt to find out something about him."

"Yes—the Indians, most likely, and Riden has an Indian guide."

Both smoked meditatively and without speaking for a while, until Hank Ward broke the silence.

"Did you know Solon Marley, my boy?"

"Very slightly, if at all. I have been away from home most of the time, at school and

college and elsewhere, and I knew nothing about my father's business."

"I don't think your father troubles himself any about Marley. He lost money, to be sure, whether it was Marley who robbed him or not, but he never seemed to fret about it. Marley was Ralston's brother-in-law, and it was Ralston who made all the fuss about the forgeries and that sort of thing. He kept it up too, after the firm was dissolved, when folks thought he might better have dropped it."

"I should think he would have dropped it, out of respect to his own family," suggested Charley.

"But he didn't. He was a mean man, that Ralston, and your father knew it. One of the spiteful kind, cross and stubborn, cranky and queer."

"Where is he living now?"

"In Boston, I believe, and I shouldn't wonder if it was he who sent that detective up here."

"Do you suppose, Hank, that Solon Marley's daughter is living in the woods with him?"

"Did I say he was living in the woods? Hush, Charley! What do you think that is?"

There was nothing to be seen that called forth this question; but there was something to be heard by keeping quiet and listening.

It was a commotion in the lake, not loud, but quite distinct, and it sounded as if some animal were swimming or disporting itself out there.

"It must be a deer in the lake," said Charley.

"Somethin' of the sort," responded Hank.

"Let's go and get him."

The tall guide was quite willing, and they quickly launched the canoe, taking their rifles and a coil of light line.

Hemlock Hank sat in the stern to paddle, leaving his young friend to rest his rifle on the bow and do the shooting.

Almost noiselessly the canoe glided over the quiet water in the direction of the sound, stopping now and then to locate it.

Soon they had no doubt that it was caused by the swimming of a deer, as it appeared to be passing from the main land to a group of islands.

The gradual change of direction compelled Hank to guide the canoe more and more toward the group of islands, until it was headed directly for them.

"I think I see him," said Charley at last. "Send her along right sharply, Hank, just as you are going now."

The noise of Hank's paddling easily drowned the other noise, as the canoe shot swiftly toward the islands.

It reached the nearest one; but no deer was visible there, in the water or elsewhere.

A halt was made, and the two men listened; but they heard nothing like the swimming of an animal, nor any other sound.

The deer, Charley thought, must have made a landing on the island near which they were floating, and he requested his companion to paddle around among them, in the hope of finding him.

Slowly the canoe glided in among the group, and each made the best use of his eyes, in searching the islands for the deer.

Their search was not rewarded by the faintest indication of the deer's existence.

But they saw something else.

As they passed through the narrow channel between two islands, there was a third island just ahead of them, but at a distance of perhaps one hundred yards.

Both were looking ahead, and in the shadow of that island they clearly saw the form of a canoe.

In the canoe was what seemed to be the shape of a woman, seated, and with a paddle in her hands.

It was moving in the shadow of the island so swiftly, that they might well have supposed it to be a phantom boat, propelled by spirits.

Only for an instant they saw it.

Then it vanished suddenly and utterly, as if the lake had swallowed it.

Each uttered a suppressed exclamation, and then they turned and looked at each other.

Their looks and tones were expressive of great astonishment, if not of actual awe.

"Did you see that, Hank?" asked Charley Creed in a whisper.

Hank nodded.

"It was a woman in a canoe. Pull up, and let us follow it."

"'Twas a spook, Charley. It ain't safe to meddle with that sort."

"Oh, bother! It did vanish as a spook might have vanished, if there were any such things as spooks; but it was a woman in a canoe. Hurry up, Hank!"

As the guide showed no disposition to go ahead, Charley picked up his own paddle, and soon sent the canoe over to the island.

Nothing was to be seen there but the silent and moveless trees.

No woman—no canoe—nothing to indicate the existence of either.

Charley skirted the island, and examined it, without making any further discovery, and then he glanced across the lake.

There he saw it again.

By the transient gleam of a streak of moonlight he clearly saw the canoe and the woman seated in it.

It was moving with wonderful swiftness toward the shore, which was but a little distance from the island on that side, and had already nearly reached the shadow of the trees.

Charley gripped his paddle nervously, turned the head of his own canoe, and sent it swiftly in the direction of the other.

But he had hardly made three strokes when the phantom canoe again vanished, suddenly and utterly, just as it had before, except that this time there was no possibility that it might have disappeared around the point of an island.

Slowly the young man paddled his canoe until it nearly reached the shore, and then turned and lingered about there a few minutes.

The beach at this point was lined with tall reeds and a tangled mass of bushes.

No canoe could be seen there, nor was there anything to show that one had visited the spot.

Again he changed the direction of his craft, and paddled back toward the other side of the lake. Since the second appearance of the phantom canoe Hemlock Hank had not dipped his paddle in the water, and had not uttered a word.

He did not speak until they were at a considerable distance from the shore.

"I hope you are satisfied now, Charley," he said, as he began to paddle.

"Satisfied about what?"

"That it was a spook—the thing we saw in the water."

"Well, Hank, I don't believe in spooks. If you think it was a spirit, whose spirit was it?"

"That's more'n I know. The Injuns have a yarn about some sort of a god of theirs, named Pamolah, who was a big somebody among 'em. They say that he fell in love with a mighty pretty young squaw, who was an awful flirt. He got mad at last, and carried her away to old Katahdin, to keep her out of the way of all men. There she has been ever since, and whenever an Injun comes nigh the mounting, Pamolah starts up a storm and scares him off."

"She must be frightfully old and ugly by this time," remarked Charley; "but I would be willing to swear that the woman I saw in the canoe was young and pretty."

"Do you mean to hold to it that 'twas a woman, then?"

Hank Ward looked at his companion as a strict churchman might regard a person who avowed his disbelief in the Christian religion; but his thoughts were too deep for utterance.

"Of course I do," answered the young man. "Spook me no spooks, if you please. I wish I knew where she came from, and where she went to. I mean to find out, if it takes me a month."

"There you go ag'in, Charley Creed!" cried his mentor. "Allus wantin' to run your head ag'inst some sort of a stun wall!"

CHAPTER IV.

A BEAR AFLOAT.

THE next morning, when Hemlock Hank and Charley Creed arose from their couches of odorous boughs, a great and unpleasant surprise awaited them.

Their boat had disappeared!

It had been well made fast to a tree the evening before, and the last thing Hank Ward did before turning in was to see that it was secure.

But in the morning it was gone.

Charley Creed at once connected this disappearance with the phantom boat and its spirit occupant which they had seen at night.

But Hemlock Hank connected it more directly with something quite different.

They had not thought it worth while to haul up the canoe, or to do anything more than to make it fast with the painter, because they had considered themselves safe from all sorts of intrusion.

But they had not calculated against bears.

Of all the beasts that range the forest there is probably none so mischievous as the black bear. Much of his mischief doubtless proceeds from his insatiable curiosity, which is not easily daunted, and which fastens eagerly upon everything that is new and strange to him.

He must examine and test whatever he comes across, generally to the destruction of the article examined.

"There's the boat, Charley," said Hank Ward, pointing out on the lake.

There it was, in plain sight, and Charley wondered why he had not seen it sooner.

It was about a hundred yards only from the shore, but had drifted considerably more than that distance up the lake.

There it was, and it was occupied and loaded.

The load might be roughly guessed at eight hundred pounds, and would be more likely to go over that figure than under it.

Its occupant was a black bear, which was seated on his haunches, near the middle of the boat, composedly and contentedly looking about.

He had thrown out the paddles and the set-

ting-poles, which could be seen floating on the water, and had not as yet discovered anything else that needed investigation.

In fact, he seemed to be taking life easy and enjoying his ride.

It was evident that he had gnawed the rope, doubtless attracted by the scent of tar.

Then he had got into the boat to examine it, and it had drifted away with him.

"It is lucky that our lockers are tight," said Hemlock Hank. "I don't believe that even a bear could git into them."

"But how are we to get our boat?" demanded Charley. "That is the important point."

"Jest so, and I'm afraid that if we don't git it right soon, that beast will make a ruination of it."

"Suppose we run up the shore, Hank, and knock him out with our rifles."

"I wouldn't do. Unless the first shot settled him—which it wouldn't—he'd git mad and make splinters of the canoe."

This objection was made more forcible at the moment by a light breeze that sprung up and increased the distance between the bear and the land.

"What shall we do, then?" inquired Charley.

"We must make a raft, and go out and tackle the creetur."

"But that will take a long time."

"Not so very long, and the bear'll wait for us. He won't think of takin' to the water, in the way of a dive, unless he is forced to it."

Each set at work with his ax to build a raft.

Hank Ward was correct in saying that the job would not be a lengthy one.

They soon had ready four stout logs, which they rolled into the water and fastened together with pins, using an auger which they happened to have taken out of the canoe.

Then they cut a couple of long setting-poles, took their rifles and an ax, and shoved the raft from shore.

All this had taken time, though they had worked as fast as they could.

But there was the canoe yet, and the bear was there, too.

He was evidently getting uneasy, as he rose now and then, and ranged the narrow confines of the craft, as if weary of the voyage, or seeking for something that might gratify his curiosity or exercise his destructive propensities.

The breeze had taken him to a considerable distance from his starting-point, but he had not yet come near any island or point of land.

With their setting-poles the voyagers pushed their raft through the water at a good rate of speed, the lake being shallow enough to allow that method of propulsion over the greater part of its extent.

As the raft approached the canoe, the uneasiness of the bear increased.

He at first surveyed it curiously, sniffing as he caught the scent of the men borne to him by the light breeze.

Then he paced the canoe, looking over the windward side now and then, as if meditating a plunge.

But his heart failed him, and when the raft approached the canoe he just sat up and snarled at the men who were coming to put an end to his enjoyment.

Charley Creed could not help laughing at Bruin's comical air of displeasure and disgust.

"He may be laughin' at us afore long, unless we play our game right sharp," remarked the guide. "Bears is curious critturs, and when they git the devil in 'em they're hard to handle."

When the raft was within a few paces of the canoe, Hemlock Hank thrust his setting-pole into the mud, and stayed the course of the clumsy float.

It stopped near the bow of the canoe, and in full view of the displeasing countenance of Bruin, who was still seated on his haunches and snarling at his enemies.

"Now for your rifle, Charley," said Hank, as he dropped on one knee, and braced himself for a careful aim.

His companion did likewise.

"We must make a sure thing of it, my boy, if we can. Aim right between his shoulders, and don't shoot until I give the word."

The bear still sat up and faced them, doubtless ignorant of the death-dealing qualities of the tubes that were leveled at him.

"Now, Charley!" ordered Hank, and both rifles cracked together.

"The ax, Charley!" shouted Hank, as he quickly pulled up his setting-pole, prepared to get the raft out of the way of an attack by the bear.

But the heavy dose of lead that he had received in his vitals was too much for Bruin.

He fell backward, pawed aimlessly at the air, and gave up the ghost.

"That was a good job; but we had better load up before we go any nigher to the crittur," said Hank.

They reloaded their rifles, poled the raft alongside the canoe, and looked more closely at Bruin.

He was dead, and would never again steal a canoe from unwary campers.

To their great delight they perceived that

he had done no special harm to the stolen property.

"We will have a job to wash out that craft," grumbled Hemlock Hank.

"But we have gained another good bearskin," replied Charley Creed.

They hitched the canoe to the raft, and poled them both ashore, where they took out the carcass of the bear, and washed the boat.

While Hemlock Hank was removing the pelt from their prey, Charley Creed cruised about and picked up the lost paddles and setting-poles.

CHAPTER V.

"SIGNS AND WARNINGS."

THE night following the arrest and summary execution of the thieving bear, the campers again went out on the lake in their canoe.

Hemlock Hank wanted to show his companion what he considered a very pleasant and effective way of catching pickerel.

For this purpose he took a stone for an anchor, and a pine torch well coated with resinous matter.

"I know what you mean," said Charley. "You are going to spear them. I have speared salmon that way, out in Idaho. It is a sort of butchery, and I don't like it. But I fail to see, Hank, what we are going to do for spears."

"We don't want no spears, sonny. You're off the trail. We anchor out in the lake, and stick a blazin' torch up in the bow of the boat. It draws the fish, and then we ketch 'em, quite in the reg'lar and proper way."

The guide's plan proved to be both pleasant and effective.

Out into the track of the torchlight he threw a hook well baited, but without a sinker, and pulled it in lightly and swiftly, making it skip over the water as it approached the boat.

Charley Creed did not at once catch the knack of skipping his hook, but when he once got hold of it the result was delightful to him.

The big fish grabbed it greedily, and he had fine sport in playing them and pulling them in.

"If we had rods and reels," said he, "this sort of fishing would be just splendid."

"It's good enough as it is," answered Hank. "These fish ain't what you may call civilized, and we don't have to put on frills with 'em."

In a short time they had secured a fine mess of fish, enough for a big breakfast, and they concluded to quit and go back to camp.

The sky in the mean time had become darkened by heavy clouds, and the atmosphere was close and oppressive.

In the excitement of the sport they had not taken note of these indications.

Suddenly they were startled by a loud report, and a black cloud shot down upon the surface of the lake, a little way ahead of the canoes.

"Thunder and Mars!" exclaimed Hank, as he hastily lifted the anchor.

Another cloud seemed to rise from the lake to meet that which had shot from the sky, and the combined forces bore down upon the boat at a terrific rate of speed, while the water jumped upward in a column, boiling and roaring, as if a cataract had started in the wrong direction.

The laws of gravitation were set at defiance by this phenomenon, and the proprieties of Nature were violated without regard to the eminent authors who have described them.

Before the canoeists could make a move to escape, they were forced to clutch the sides of their light craft, which was suddenly caught up into the air, and dizzily whirled about.

Three times it turned around, as if on a point, and then it quietly settled back upon the surface of the lake.

Each of the occupants of the canoe had lost his head-covering, but of the rest of its contents nothing had even been misplaced.

The whirling storm had gone by.

They saw it strike an island, where it lifted a great cloud of leaves and sticks and dust.

Then it burst and passed away.

"I've seen worse'n that," remarked Hemlock Hank, "but never felt anythin' worse in that line."

"It seemed to me," said Charley, "as if it would pull all the hair out of my head."

"And it was as hot as fire, too. I came nigh meltin'."

"I am sure that I smelt sulphur, Hank."

"Of course you did. It was that old Injun devil of Katahdin that picked us up and shook us."

"What puzzles me is that he did not shake the life out of us. He dropped the canoe as softly as a kitten would drop a mouse."

"Jest so—like a cat playin' with a mouse. He wanted to give us a warnin', you see."

"Why couldn't he speak to us like a gentleman, then?"

"That's his way o' talkin'. Mebbe, though, he didn't mean us. Some Injun has been tryin' to steal his squaw, I guess, and old Pamolah has shot one of his lightnin' storms at the chap."

"I wish he would take better aim, and be careful whom he hits. Suppose we hunt our hats, Hank."

They found their head-coverings floating near

by, and pulled them in and squeezed the water out of them.

"Talk about Pamolah!" suddenly exclaimed Charley Creed. "Look there, Hank!"

Darkness still sat upon the face of the water, but near the shore they saw dimly the phantom canoe which had astonished and bewildered them the night before.

Charley Creed dipped his paddle in the water, and pulled with all his strength in that direction.

Hank Ward did not help him by a single stroke.

A form was visible in the skiff, but they could not make it out until a flash of lightning showed it pretty plainly against the dark background of the shore.

"It is a man!" cried Charley. "He looks like an Indian."

"Old Pamolah himself, this time," muttered Hank.

Then the darkness was deeper than ever, and the next instant the phantom canoe vanished as if it had melted into the night.

Charley Creed paddled close to the land and ranged along the shore, but he saw no canoe there nor any sign of a landing.

All at once the clouds seemed to drop upon them, and such a flood of rain fell that they were glad to turn and paddle back to camp as swiftly as possible.

They did not reach it until they were soaking wet, and the canoe was half-full of water.

As they were drying themselves under their shelter tent, and smoking meditative pipes previous to turning in, they naturally spoke of the strange events of the night.

In Charley Creed's mind the phantom canoe was uppermost.

But he and Hank had different views concerning it.

"Tell you what, sonny," said the latter, "we'll have to git away from here."

"Why so?" demanded Charley. "Seems to me that this is as good a place to camp as we will be likely to find."

"Tain't the camp that I'm speakin' of. We must git away from this lake—away from this neck o' woods. Suppose we go back and try the Mattawamkeog or the Sebols. Big, wild country either way, with lots to see and to shoot."

Charley Creed stared at his companion as if he supposed him to have taken leave of his senses.

"Why, Hank, what's the matter with you? You talk as if you want to run away. What is there to run away from?"

"Charley," solemnly answered the guide, "haven't we had warnin's enough?"

"Warnin's? Whatsort of warnin's? About what?"

"Warnin's from old Pamolah that he don't want us here, and that he means to drive us away. When he gits his head set on that, we've got to go—or die."

The young man stared harder than ever. His friend must surely be going crazy.

"Hank Ward, do you really mean to tell me that you actually believe all that stuff and nonsense about the Indian god and his squaw? Are you really under the impression that we have been seeing spooks?"

"Now, Charley," slowly answered the guide, as he fidgeted about, "it is hard for a man to tell what he really believes or don't believe about anythin' but hard facts. There's lots of tales about sperrits and spooks and sech, and about signs and wonders, that a many folks believe in solid. For my part, whether I act'ally believe in 'em or not, I don't like to go ag'in' 'em. When one of the signs or warnin's that are told about comes to me, I think it is best to be on the safe side and mind it."

"I'll be shot, Hank Ward, if I understand you. Please tell me plainly what you mean, and what signs and warnin's we have had."

"We all know, Charley—leastways, all the lumbermen and Injuns know it—that old Katahdin beats all creation for storms, and that they are the all-firedest, outtearin'est storms that this part of the kentry can show. There must be a reason for the old hillock's cantankerous conduct, and the Injuns give us their reason. Who is to say that they ain't right? They've been here longer than we have, and know more about the mounting than we know."

"As for signs and warnin's, they have been plain enough, and have come hot and heavy."

"Last night we saw a spook of a woman in a canoe. A raal woman in a ginooine canoe couldn't have got away like that outfit did. That was a gentle hint to us to clear out. We didn't mind it, and this mornin' a bear gobbled our canoe and sailed away with it."

Charley Creed could no longer restrain his laughter.

"Do you mean to say, Hank, that the bear was sent to us by Pamolah?"

"No tellin'," ambiguously answered the guide. "Like as not it was."

"Then he has lost a bear, and bad luck to him."

"To-night," continued Hank, "we were picked up by a storm, and sech a storm! I wonder it didn't snatch us into kingdom come. As if that wasn't warnin' enough, we saw the spook ag'in."

"Another spook," suggested Charley.

"Mebbe it was—a man spook this time. Like as not it was old Pamolah himself."

"You have hit it!" exclaimed Charley. "I believe you now. That is just what it was. And I mean to hunt the old scoundrel by daylight to-morrow, and run him down, and make him repent his bad behavior. That's enough now, Hank. I am going to sleep."

CHAPTER VI. HUNTING THE SPOOK.

CHARLEY CREED'S defiant declaration before he turned in had dazed his companion somewhat; but it was not likely that the guide was worried about it in his dreams.

In the morning, however, it was repeated and emphasized.

After breakfast Hemlock Hank reiterated his opinion that they ought to abandon that part of the country; but Charley resolutely declared that he would do nothing of the kind.

"If you want to run away, old man," said he, "you can go. I shall be sorry to part from you; but you can't take me with you. Here I stay until I investigate that canoe business, and run down that spook."

Hank Ward fidgeted and frowned.

"Now, Charley," he pleaded, "you don't really mean to go ag'inst me like that."

"I do, though, and my heart is as hard as flint. I am as solid in this matter as old Katahdin, and as cantankerous as Pamolah himself."

Hemlock Hank endeavored to accomplish by the use of his authority what was evidently beyond the reach of his arguments.

"You know, sonny, that it was settled between us that I am the captain of this craft."

"That's right. You are the captain when the craft is in commission; but I am the owner, and have a right to say what voyage she shall make. I am the crew, too, and I give you fair warning that on this question the crew is liable to desert. Come, Hank; there's no use talking; I am going to start out this morning, and mean to search the lake, and all about it, until I find that canoe and run down that spook."

"What shall I say to your father, my boy, when I go home without you?"

It was Charley's turn to plead now, and his look was even more sorrowful than that of his friend.

"Please, old man, don't speak in that way. Honest, now, do you really think you could leave me? Why, you dear old chap, you know that I would pine away and grieve myself to death if you were gone. You could never have the heart to go home without me."

There were actually tears in the young man's eyes, and even the rough visage of Hemlock Hank showed signs of yielding to the melting mood.

"Give me to-day, Hank," pleaded Charley again—"only this day! Let me take one look around the lake, and then I will go wherever you say."

What could the guide do but yield?

"Jest like you, Charley Creed," said he. "Allus wantin' to run your head ag'inst some stun wall or another, and crazy if anybody tries to hold you back."

"It is my own head," suggested Charley.

"But it has been put in my care. Git your traps ready, my boy, and I'll go with you, so that if you git swallowed up, I'll be swallowed, too."

Charley was decidedly of the opinion that there was no danger of being swallowed; but he did not say so.

He had gained so much that he felt in honor bound to conform to the prejudices of his friend.

They took their rifles and a lunch, and folded up the shelter-tent and put it in the canoe.

All their other belongings were cached to keep them out of the reach of the forest depredators.

It was nearly noon when they started, and the day was bright and beautiful.

The lake was like a mirror, and the islands were like gems upon its shining surface, and the shores were lovely with the variegated tints of autumn.

Charley perceived with surprise and pleasure that when they were fairly under way his friend's demeanor changed quickly and considerably.

Hank no longer frowned, or uttered dismal forebodings, or spoke of Pamolah or the spooks; nor did he make any reference to his recent project of running away.

Indeed, he seemed to take a lively interest in the expedition, and was as bright and cheery as a boy at play-spell.

Though Charley was agreeably surprised at this change, he made no mention of it, for fear that he might break the charm.

He had a suspicion, too, that his friend's pleasant demeanor might be assumed for the purpose of covering some plan to cheat him out of his search for the spook.

The young man had not failed to notice the fact that each time the phantom canoe vanished it disappeared at about the same spot as regarded the shore of the lake.

That spot, therefore, was the one which he

determined should have the first and the most careful inspection.

At that point, as near as he could locate it, and for some distance on each side of it, the shore was heavily overgrown with a tangled mass of bushes.

The lake-side of the bushes was marshy and covered with a rank growth of reeds and rushes, beyond which abundant lily-pads extended for some distance into the water.

But there was one spot where the lily-pads were less numerous, and where the reeds and rushes were more scattering.

At that point, too, there seemed to be a gentle current flowing into the lake.

Here the canoe was halted, and Charley inspected the spot closely.

He perceived that some of the reeds were bent, and others broken, as if by the passage of something through and over them.

He was sure that he was on the track of the phantom canoe.

"There is a stream that comes out here, Hank," he said. "We will get into it and see what it looks like."

"All right, my boy. Stand by to part the bushes, and I will 'tend to the paddlin'."

Charley may have distrusted his friend's alacrity; but there was no discount on the style in which the canoe was sent straight ahead and at a good rate of speed, through the lily-pads and the reeds, right where the water was deepest.

The young man had as much as he could do to clear a way through the bushes that hung over the stream and hid it.

For it was a stream, as was plain enough to them when they had pushed through the tangle—a stream sufficiently broad and deep to float their canoe.

It flowed through flat and heavily-timbered land, each side bordered by a rank growth of bushes, and the voyagers saw there no sign of any canoe but their own.

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Hank.

"Going straight ahead," answered Charley.

Straight ahead they did go—that is to say, in as straight a course as the windings of the stream would permit, though in places it was so narrow that it was no easy matter to shove the canoe ahead.

Still it passed through the same heavy timber, and still its low banks were lined thickly with bushes, which Charley Creed scrutinized carefully as they passed, but saw no further sign of the presence or passage of the phantom canoe.

Thus they voyaged, as they judged, fully two miles, and the stream grew no narrower or shallower, and there was nothing to prevent their going ahead, until they came in sight of a spur of the great mountain.

It loomed up before them suddenly, having been hid by the heavy timber, and in a few minutes they reached it.

Then they discovered that there was no longer any passage for their boat, as at that point the stream made a considerable fall over the rocks.

There, if anywhere, the phantom canoe was to be found, unless it had been carried away.

As the light craft touched the shore near the foot of the rapids, Charley Creed uttered a cry of joy and leaped out on the land.

He pointed triumphantly at the print of a foot on the soft earth there.

It was the print of a moccasin, but of a moccasin that had covered a small foot.

"Injuns!" muttered Hemlock Hank.

"It is the footprint of the spook!" exclaimed Charley.

Before them was a wall of rock, at the foot of which was a heavy growth of bushes.

As Charley lifted the bushes and looked among them, he uttered another cry of joy.

"I've found her!" he exclaimed.

"What! No!" shouted Hank, in tones of dismay.

"Not the spook, but the canoe. Here it is."

They did not pull it out, but examined it as it lay there in its place of concealment.

It was a birch bark canoe made in the Indian fashion, and very well made, evidently by an Indian—very light, but at the same time quite strong.

An ashen paddle lay in it, and that was all.

No—there was something else.

A small something, but sufficient to give a clew to the ownership of the craft.

It was a bit of figured muslin, evidently torn from a dress of that material.

Charley put it in his pocket after he had closely examined it.

Then he sat down on a stone by the water and lighted his pipe.

"What are you going to do now?" inquired Hank.

"Going to camp right here until I see the spook."

"Suppose old Pamolah should fling the mountain down on you?"

"Then I would stay here, because I couldn't get away. You see, Hank, I am convinced that your spook is a woman, because the footprint I found is that of a woman's foot. She is white,

too, as no Indian woman would be likely to wear a dress like the bit that was in the canoe. "Put a young chap on the trail of a girl," muttered Hank, "and he'll follow it through fire and water."

"Oh, is it a girl, then?"

"How do I know? You say it is."

"Yes, Hank, I am convinced that it is a girl, or a woman. The canoe is real and the spook must be real. The disappearance of the craft is accounted for by the fact that it was run in under the bushes at the edge of the lake. It seems that the spook does her cruising at night, and she may be expected to come at night for the canoe. I mean to stay here until she comes."

"Have it your own way," grumbled Hank. "But we've got to eat, and I'm hungry right now."

They made a cold supper of the food they had brought from camp, and sat down to smoke their pipes in the dusk.

"We have got away with all our grub," remarked Hank. "What are we going to do for breakfast?"

"Sufficient for the— By Jove!"

The young man jumped up with his rifle in his hand, brought it to his shoulder, and pointed it toward the bushes at the foot of the rock.

"What is it?" asked Hank, as he also rose to his feet.

A pair of dark but bright eyes could be seen peering through the foliage.

"Hush!" whispered Charley. "It's a deer."

Hemlock Hank sprung forward and threw up the barrel of the rifle, which was discharged in the direction of Pamolah's abode.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the young man.

He did not ask again, as the question was answered by the appearance of a girl, who stepped forward from among the bushes, which she parted with her hands.

"How you frightened me!" said a silvery voice.

CHAPTER VII.

PAMOLAH'S WONDROUS WAYS.

UP the east branch of the Penobscot, beyond and to the northward of its congeries of big and beautiful lakes, two men were voyaging in a skiff.

Vast forests were all around them, intensifying the stillness of their lonely voyage, and over their course when the sun was low fell the great shadow of Mount Katahdin.

Though their skiff was heavier than that controlled by Hemlock Hank and Charley Creed, it was light enough to be carried by four strong arms.

They had just reached a pretty formidable rapid when we find them, and were unloading their craft for the purpose of making a portage.

One of the men, who was unquestionably the leader of the party of two, was doubtless a white man, though his complexion was as dark as that of an Indian.

He was a little below the average height of men, and was of stout build—not fat, but thick-set and solid.

Streaks of gray in his dark hair and bushy beard showed that he had reached the middle age of life, and his square face, heavy eyebrows, massive jaw and firm mouth, spoke of strong will and indomitable resolution.

Evidently a man whom nothing could daunt or hinder, and who was not to be turned aside from the accomplishment of any purpose upon which he had set his heart.

He was dressed in a stout and serviceable garb, with high boots and a slouch hat, and his arms were a rifle and a revolver.

His companion was clearly an Indian, as was shown by his straight black hair and his high cheek-bones, as well as by the bronze hue of his skin.

One of the few remnants of the ancient tribes of that region, who had become in a manner the servants of the white men, acting as their guides, hunters, or general helpers.

He was a little taller than his companion, and probably a few years younger, slight of build, and doubtless active on his feet.

His attire was partly civilized, but with strong traces of the style of his own people about it, and his weapons were a long rifle and a long knife.

"Now, Auguste," said the white man, "we will carry the skiff and things up to the head of these rapids, and will camp there. In the morning we will go up in the mountain."

"Up in de mount'in, Missa Ridsen?" repeated the Indian, staring stupidly at his leader.

"Yes, of course. That is what we are here for. Why not?"

"Katahdin bad fur Injun, Missa Ridsen."

"Bah! why is it worse for an Indian than for anybody else?"

"You know 'bout ole Pamolah. When Injun goes up dere, Pamolah raises a dibbil ob a row, an' kills Injun."

"Nonsense! I told you awhile ago that you must get those silly notions out of your head if you stick to me, and you've got to stick to me, or get hurt. Pick up your end of the skiff, and

we will carry it up. You may take the stern, as you are a little taller than I am."

The portage was a pretty severe one, and they were obliged to make several halts for rest on the way; but there was still plenty of daylight when they reached the head of the rapids.

It was a lovely spot there, and finely fitted by nature for a camping-place.

The river, though then at a low stage, spread out so that it might almost be called a lake, and under the great trees of pine and spruce and hemlock and tamarack the ground was so thickly covered with their needle-like foliage that it offered a ready-made bed to the tired traveler.

The air was heavy with balmy odors, and the entire forest surroundings spoke of health and peace, as well as quiet and seclusion.

After launching the skiff on the quiet water, Dick Ridsen at once set at work to prepare the camp, sending his companion back to the foot of the rapids to bring up their "plunder."

Both were tired and hungry when their frugal meal was ready, and they ate, "like brave men, long and well."

Then they lighted their pipes, and seated themselves to enjoy their smoke, that unailing source of comfort and consolation in the woods.

By this time it was night, and their fire sent a ruddy and cheerful glare out over the surface of the water.

The darkness of the night was increased by gathering clouds in the sky; but the men below, shut in by the heavy foliage of the tall trees, thought nothing of any surprise that the elements might be preparing for them.

"I tell you, Auguste," said Dick Ridsen, speaking firmly and solidly, as he was in the habit of speaking, "you have got to get that foolishness about Mount Katahdin out of your head, if it has to be knocked out."

The Indian looked down, and said nothing.

"Did you not tell me that the man I am seeking was to be found on or about the mountain there?"

The Indian nodded.

"You said that he has an Indian with him, one of your tribe, named Louis, whom he has sent to the river for supplies, which were left at Hubbard's and other places."

The Indian nodded again.

"You told me that you knew Louis; that you had tracked him to the mountain; that you had followed him part of the way up; and that you were sure that you could find the place to which he had taken the stuff."

Again the Indian nodded, puffing vigorously at his pipe.

"You had a big spree in Bangor, Auguste; but you were sober enough when I met you and we talked this matter over, and you bargained to go with me and take me to my man. You were not afraid of Pamolah then, and have no right to be afraid of him now."

"Dat's so," replied Auguste. "Dat's all so, Missa Ridsen; but Katahdin mighty bad place fur Injuns."

"It seems that the Louis you spoke of gets along there very well, and that nothing bothered you when you followed him up into the mountain."

"Dat's so, too. But Pamolah mighty on-sart'in. Go fur Injun 'most any time."

"Nonsense! I say again that it is nonsense, and I won't stand it. You have agreed to make this trip with me, and you have got to do it. To-morrow we go up into the mountain. That's solid."

When Dick Ridsen said "that's solid," it meant that he was determined to carry his point in spite of everything.

Auguste understood this, and knew that any further opposition would be unavailing.

He had put in his protest and the future must be left to Pamolah, the deity who controlled Katahdin.

He said nothing more, but turned in with Dick Ridsen under the shelter-tent.

They had not slept long when they were suddenly awakened by a terrible hullabaloo.

The tent was stripped from over them in a twinkling, and whirled away out of their sight.

At the same instant there was a horrible noise of the roaring of wind, the falling of trees, and the crashing and breaking of timber.

The air had been cool when they laid down to sleep, and should have been yet cooler at that hour; but it was hot as a furnace, and the oppression was so great that it was difficult to breathe.

As they jumped up from the ground, the wind almost took them off their feet.

They ran to the nearest trees that were standing, and clung to them for safety.

The darkness was so thick, and the confusion was so terrible, that their eyes were of little use to them, and they were obliged to rely upon their senses of hearing and feeling to give them information of what was going on.

It seemed as if all the demons of the upper air had been let loose upon them at once.

But they soon discovered, greatly to their satisfaction, that they were only on the edge of the storm.

The river was smooth and placid, and the skiff scarcely stirred on its surface.

At the distance of a few rods from the shore

was the belt of the hurricane, its location being indicated, though indistinctly, by the fearful roar of the wind and the continual crash of falling trees.

Almost before they could say it was there, it was gone, and the terrible hullabaloo was dying away in the distance.

Behind it came a rush of cold air, chilling them so that they were obliged to use violent exercise to keep from being benumbed.

Gradually the normal condition of the atmosphere was restored, and they built a fire, by which they expected to lie down and pass the remainder of the night, the darkness being still so great that they were unable to prepare a better couch.

"That was a frightful hurricane," remarked Ridsen.

"Pamolah big ole debbil at dat," answered the Indian.

"Pamolah be blowed! Such storms are quite frequent in these parts, and your Pamolah has no more to do with them than with April showers. What do you suppose the old seed was trying to do, anyhow?"

"Try to stop Injun from goin' up Katahdin."

"He must be a very stupid fellow, then, or he would have taken better aim with his storm. I don't see that we have been stopped any, so far."

"Missa Ridsen see in de mornin'."

CHAPTER VIII.

KATAHDIN STARTS A CATARACT.

THE next morning the travelers were able to survey the scene of destruction, and Dick Ridsen found abundant evidence to convince him that if Pamolah had been trying to hinder them from reaching the mountain, he had put in his work to some purpose.

The belt of fallen timber that marked the course of the hurricane was absolutely impassable.

If the campers had happened to pitch their tent in the track of the storm, their mangled bodies would have remained in that tangle, beyond recovery.

They would never have known what hurt them.

Even stout Dick Ridsen, tough as he was in every fiber, and inured to all manner of perils, shuddered as he comprehended the danger which they had so closely escaped.

They fortunately found their tent at the edge of the tangle, not far from the spot where it had been pitched.

It was rolled up almost as neatly and tightly as they could have done the job themselves, and had been deposited in the crotch of a tree.

"Your Pamolah has been very careful of our property," said Ridsen. "I am much obliged to him for that."

"Pamolah say stop—dat all," was the Indian's opinion.

"He does, does he? Well, we won't stop, whatever he may say. I have not come this far to stop."

After breakfast they examined carefully the belt that showed the track of the storm, and Ridsen was compelled to admit that it was too formidable a barrier to meddle with.

It was as if a mowing machine had been run through the forest, cutting a swath so clean and true that not a twig had been touched outside of its lines on either side.

Within those lines the trees had been tumbled and heaped together—big and little trees, saplings, and bushes and vines—thrown together helter-skelter and in the wildest confusion, as if with the purpose of creating a *cheval de frise* that would prevent the passage of an army.

It was useless to think of climbing over it, and to cut through it would have required days of labor.

The passage of Ridsen and his Indian was prevented, and the stout detective, who was accustomed to looking facts in the face, at once acknowledged the obstacle.

"It is a great pity to waste such a fine lot of timber for a trifle," said he, "and I wish there was some way of making Pamolah pay for it. If the old sinner had given us a hint that he wanted us to go around, we would not have put him to so much trouble."

"Pamolah got him own way," remarked the Indian.

"So it seems, and a darned bad way it is, too. Well, Auguste, as we have got to go around, the sooner we set about it the better."

They loaded their "traps" into the skiff, and went further up the river, stopping now and then to examine the forest and see if there was a passage for them.

The result showed that the track of the storm extended somewhat more than half a mile beyond their camping-ground of the night before, and along that course there was not a point at which they could cross without great labor.

It was much the easiest plan to go around, as they well knew when they reached the end of the belt of fallen timber.

There they established another camp, ate their dinner, hauled up the skiff, and cached such of their belongings as they were not to take with them.

As Ridsen's intention had been to ascend the mountain from a point opposite their camping-ground of the night before, they were obliged, in order to reach that point, to make another detour, passing down the other side of the storm's track.

Thus the afternoon was nearly half ended when they came to the starting-place.

But Ridsen insisted upon beginning the ascent, though the Indian objected.

"Heap too late," grumbled Auguste. "Git caught by night—git lost."

"For a man who has been through as much as you have, you've got precious little sand in your craw," remarked the white man. "If we don't start now, what will we do?"

"Sit down—eat grub—smoke pipe."

"Nobody gets ahead by sitting down and smoking. We can eat and smoke anywhere else as well as here. If we do push on, we can stop where night catches us, and have a good start in the morning."

So they did push on, carrying their weapons and a fair supply of provisions.

From their starting-place the side of the mountain was thickly covered with a tangled growth of alders and short birch trees, so beaten down and pressed together by the winds that the only way to force a path through them would be by cutting it.

But a road had been prepared by nature, and it was for the sake of following that road through the tangle that they had chosen that point for starting.

It was a clear-cut track, leading straight upward, almost entirely destitute of any kind of growth, and hollowed out as if a portion of the mountain had fallen from the top and cut a way for itself to the bottom.

About in the middle of it flowed a clear and rapid brook.

The water was then quite low in the brook, but at the sides of the track were indications that it had filled all the visible open space through the tangle.

It was pretty hard climbing in places, but they got onward and upward at a fair rate of speed, Dick Ridsen taking the lead.

The sky was clear, and the sun was shining brightly, and all the indications were of fair weather, and the detective was sure that he had done well to make a start.

"Your Pamolah is in a good-humor to-day, Auguste," said he. "I don't believe that he really wants to stop us. That storm last night was only a bit of his play."

"Jess wait—den mebbe you see," growled the Indian.

They did see something, when they had got a little higher up.

It was a bear, which was feasting on the cranberries that grew on the bushes that lined the slide.

He turned as they approached him, and looked as if he would prefer not to be interrupted in his repast.

"See dere!" warningly shouted Auguste, who was a little behind his leader.

"Oh, I see that. It is nothing but a bear."

"Bad bear, dat, Missa Ridsen."

"What is the matter with you, Auguste? Since when did you begin to get scared at a bear? Who cares for a bear?"

"Mought be somefin more'n bear. Mought be ole Pamolah hisse'f. He kin make storm or bear or w'ot he want."

"It may be the devil, for all I care; but it shan't stop me."

Ridsen drew his revolver, and fired a shot in the air, and the bear scampered off into the thicket.

"There goes your Pamolah, Auguste. Give us a rest on that, now, if you don't want to get your hide tanned."

They were getting well up the side of the mountain, and the day was drawing near its close, when both of them, as they looked up, perceived that clouds were gathering heavily about the summit of Katahdin.

Dark and ominous were the clouds, and they kept gathering thickly and growing darker and more ominous.

Yet they were only about the summit, and it was still clear enough where the travelers were.

Peals of thunder were heard plainly enough, and flashes of vivid lightning played against the blackness of the distant sky.

"Want to go back, Missa Ridsen," whined Auguste. "Dis no good place fur Injun, Pamolah goin' to raise heap debbil right now."

"Shut up!" angrily exclaimed the detective. "I have heard enough about your Pamolah, and a great deal too much. If you give me any more of that stuff, I will settle with you in a way that you won't like."

"Dis no stuff, Missa Ridsen. Big storm comin' right quick."

"Let it come! It will be a queer storm if I can't get out of its way. There is something like a flat place just above here, Auguste, and you had better pick yourself up and get to it."

Suddenly the clouds shot downward from the summit of the mountain, covering the entire sky.

The thunder grew louder and sharper, and heavy drops of rain began to fall in the slide.

Dick Ridsen pressed onward and upward; but his companion remained motionless on his knees by the brook side, as if petrified by terror.

Even louder and more ominous than the thunder was a fearful roaring of the mountain-side.

It sounded as if the crack of doom had come, and Katahdin was tumbling into ruins with the rest of the world.

"Come on, Auguste, or you'll be caught in the crush!" shouted Ridsen at the top of his voice, as he scrambled up on the little plateau which he had been hurrying to reach.

The next instant the brook was a torrent, and then an avalanche of water came rushing down the slide, carrying before it everything movable that was in its way.

Ridsen hastened to climb the rocks at the side, pulling himself up by the aid of the small trees and bushes that were rooted in the crevices.

Even then he barely got out of reach of the water, so swiftly it came, and in such vast volumes.

When he had gained a place of safety he looked below for his companion; but the Indian had vanished, and nothing could be seen there but the rapid and resistless torrent.

He could not doubt that Auguste had been swept away by the mighty rush of water.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUGH ON RISDEN.

THE rain continued to fall heavily for half an hour or so, during which time Dick Ridsen clung to his perch, completely wet through, and disgusted with the disastrous result of his attempt to climb Katahdin.

Gradually the rain slackened, and gradually the torrent decreased in volume, until he was able to climb down and find an easier resting-place on the little plateau.

It was a resting-place, but without any rest.

There was no comfort there.

By this time it was night, and the night was very dark, and a brisk storm of hail followed the rain, and the hail was succeeded by sleet, fine and sharp and biting, which lasted until near morning.

The detective would gladly have retraced his steps down the slide to seek Auguste; but the darkness was so intense that the attempt would be very dangerous, as well as impracticable.

He could not stir from where he was, and it was impossible to make a fire, as there was no dry wood at hand.

A more uncomfortable night he had never passed.

Wet through by the rain—chilled through by the hail and the sleet—without the slightest chance to sleep, or to get dry or warm—compelled to keep himself in violent motion most of the time to prevent the cold from fastening upon him too severely—his condition was anything but enviable.

Yet he was justified in considering his lot a happy one, as compared with the probable fate of Auguste.

The night seemed as if it would never end; but the sky cleared just before dawn, and when morning broke the day was bright and beautiful.

A hot breakfast would have been a great blessing to the detective just then; but there was no sort of a breakfast for him, as all the food they had brought had been swept away with Auguste.

Tired, and hungry, and stiff in every joint, he set out to climb down the slide in search of his late companion.

The brook had shrunk nearly to its ordinary dimensions, and the descent of the mountain offered no serious difficulties.

Ridsen fully expected to find the dead body of the Indian, probably at the foot of the slide.

Instead of that, he found him not far from where the torrent had caught them—alive, but by no means well.

Auguste was seated against the sunny side of a rock, endeavoring to dry and warm himself.

The drying process was working well enough; but warmth was out of the question for him just then, as he was shaking with a hard chill.

He was also severely bruised, and his bones and flesh were so sore that he was scarcely able to stir.

Though he was doubtless as tough as most men of his race, the night's encounter with the storm spirits of Katahdin had used him up badly.

He presented such a woebegone appearance that the detective, moved to pity by his misfortunes, produced a flask of liquor, and permitted him to take a hearty draught.

The fiery liquor flew through his veins, and speedily put new life into him.

With a weak voice and trembling lips he told how he had been caught and carried away by the torrent, which had thrown him down and dashed him onward so fiercely that his efforts to save himself had been utterly useless.

Fortunately he had seized a branch that hung down into the slide from a bent tree, and had finally been able to pull himself up out of the water.

But he was more like a drowned rat than a live Indian when he got out, and he had passed a most distressful night under the hail and the sleet.

"Pamolah too big fur Injun," was the sorrowful but firm conclusion of his piteous tale.

This time the detective neither argued with him nor jeered at him.

He was obliged to admit to himself that he was beginning to believe in the power and spitefulness of Pamolah.

Though Auguste had saved his life, he had lost everything he carried about him, except his rifle, which he found in the morning in the slide.

Consequently, there was no sign of any breakfast for either of the weary and hungry travelers.

"There is only one thing for us to do now," said the detective. "We will have to take the back track. We must go to camp and get some grub before we can make another start in any direction."

Auguste protested that he was quite unable to travel; but the sight of Dick Ridsen's flask, and permission to test its contents, started him up, and he declared his willingness to proceed to the best of his ability.

He got to the bottom of the slide without great difficulty, but thereafter his progress was much like that of the lazy mule which could only be persuaded to go ahead by a bundle of oats that was carried just before his nose.

Ridsen soon grew tired of tempting him forward with liquor, and firmly declared that he should not have another drop.

When he sat down, and piteously protested that he could not put one foot before another, the detective took his rifle from him, and said that he would go on and leave him to his fate.

Then the Indian got up and hobbled forward, making passably good time to the camping-place on the river.

They speedily built a fire, unearthed some provisions, and prepared a meal that put them both in better heart and humor.

As they smoked their pipes after the meal, being then quite warm and comfortable, they discussed the recent events in their relation to future operations.

That is to say, the detective discussed them, the Indian confining his remarks to ejaculations concerning the power of Pamolah, and to protests against being carried up into Katahdin.

Ridsen did not attempt to argue him out of his opinions, and appeared to acquiesce in his ideas of the red-skin's deity.

He knew that he had nobody but Auguste to depend upon to help him find the man he was seeking, and that it is much easier to lead a horse to water than to make him drink.

The easiest way is acknowledged by sensible people to be generally the best way, and Dick Ridsen had no doubt of his ability to persuade the Indian to his purpose when it was really necessary to do so.

"It is just as you say, Auguste," he mildly remarked. "Old Pamolah seems to have a special spite against you, if not against all Indians."

"Pamolah heap hard on Injun," responded Auguste.

"That's a fact, I am afraid. Being a fact, we must do the best we can without provoking him too far. Of course I must have a guide to take me up into Katahdin and all about the mountain. If I must give you up, I will have to look out for somebody else. You told me a while ago that you believed there was one white man who knew the place that I want to find."

"Tink so," answered Auguste.

"I paid no particular attention to it at the time, as one guide was enough for me; but now, when you are inclined to go back on me, I remember what you then said. Who is that white man, Auguste?"

"Hemlock Hank."

"I have heard of him. Hank Ward is his name, and he is a lumberman with the reputation of being a right smart hand at the business. Of course he always comes up into the pine woods to get out logs, and I suppose he is sometimes up this way in the fall. That so, Auguste?"

"Hunt 'um timber, den," answered the Indian.

"He may be somewhere in this region now. Quite likely he is. If so, I think I know where and how I can get on his trail, and I must find him. I will be sorry to lose you, Auguste, and of course you will be sorry to lose the money I was to pay you for going on with this job to the finish."

This was presenting the matter to the Indian in an unexpected and unpleasant light, and he was instantly aroused.

"W'ot dat?" he cried. "Lose money? Injun no can lose money."

"Then Injun must do what he agreed to do. My bargain with you was for a lump sum for the whole job, from Bangor and back, if it took all winter, and you are to get no money unless you go on and see me through."

"No can lose money. Injun go."

"Very well, then. You will have to go

where I want you to go, Pamolah or no Pamolah. Anyhow, I must find that Hemlock Hank, if he is anywhere about this stretch of woods."

CHAPTER X.

THE SPOOK APPEARS IN PERSON.

MOUNT KATAHDIN, though from a distance it presents the appearance of a solid mountain, is a series of peaks, which extend in an irregular curve a distance of several miles, inclosing a deep basin.

From one peak to another the access is generally by difficult and dangerous passes or spurs of rocks, some of which are very narrow on top.

The basin is the fabled residence of Pamolah, the Indian spirit of the storm.

About a third of the way up one of the lesser of these peaks, and connected by one of the narrow and bridge-like passes that have been mentioned with a spur that reached down to the level of the forest below, was a piece of flat land of perhaps five acres in extent—not wide, but running along the side of the peak for some distance.

From its outer edge, except at the place where the narrow pass joined it to the spur, the mountain shelved down almost perpendicularly.

Above it, too, the mountain rose steeply and to a sharp summit.

As this plateau was on the southern side of the peak, and under the full blaze of the sun, as well as shut off from the worst of the wild winds that made Katahdin their play-house, the weather might be almost hot there, while it was freezing on the northern side.

Consequently it was covered at each end with a fine growth of pine, spruce, hemlock and other trees.

It would have been so covered over its entire extent, if it had not been partly cleared and cultivated.

It was a queer place for a garden, but a garden was there.

A garden of flowers and kitchen vegetables, well tended and in good condition, though the autumn was well advanced, and many of the plants had passed their period of beauty.

Further evidence of human habitation was found in a small log-house against the mountain-side, with a stick and clay chimney at one end, and at the other an addition that served as a kitchen.

There was yet further evidence of human occupation.

Near the open door of the cabin was seated a man who was undoubtedly an Indian.

Even his attire gave scarcely any indication of civilizing influences, being a suit of buckskin and a cap of fur.

Yet he was a civilized Indian, or ought to be, considering his association with two people who stood close to the outer edge of the plateau, at the end of a path that led through the garden.

One of these was an elderly man, tall and thin, with a slight stoop in his shoulders.

His scanty hair was gray, and so was his clipped beard, and his dark, sunken eyes had a restless and uneasy look.

Generally speaking, he had the appearance of being prematurely aged and broken.

His head was uncovered and he was dressed in a suit of stout cloth, somewhat faded and worn.

The other was a girl, perhaps out of her teens, but little beyond that limit.

As to her person, she was strong and well built, her figure indicating health and activity, and the same conditions being visible in the freshness of her cheeks and the brightness of her dark eyes.

She was not by any means dressed in the height of fashion, but her simple gown of muslin and her chip hat rather the worse for wear, were quite becoming to her, and set off her fine figure fairly well.

From where they stood they had a magnificent view of the vast extent of country below them—a seemingly endless expanse of forest, spotted with shining lakes, and the Penobscot visible here and there like a silver thread.

The girl was pointing at a large lake studded with islands, which from their point of view seemed to be but a little distance from the base of the mountain.

"On yonder side of the lake was the camp," she said, "near the middle of the shore, opposite the biggest bunch of islands. If we had a good spy-glass, I am sure that I could show you the exact spot."

"It makes no difference just where it was, Mattie," replied the old man. "It is enough to know that a camp was there. You cannot be too careful, my dear, to keep away from such places."

"I was as careful as I could be, father, and I started home as soon as I discovered the camp. I confess that I was a little scared when they gave chase to me in their canoe, but I knew that I could get away from them easily enough, and I did."

"I am glad that you did not run that risk again, my dear."

"Of course I would not do that. I sent Louis to spy out the camp and he did the work

well. One of the men was our good friend, Hank Ward, and the other was a young man, a stranger."

"We are safe, then, as Hank Ward would not bring any stranger up here."

"A whirlwind came up when Louis was on the lake last night, father, and it struck their canoe; but Louis said that they were all right there when the flurry was over."

"All we have to do, my dear, is to keep away from them."

"That will be easy enough, I suppose. I am going to run down to the falls now, and see if my canoe is all right."

"Is it worth while, Mattie?"

"I think so. I want to carry it further away from the water, and hide it better."

"Is it not rather late to set out on such an errand?"

"Oh, you know that I go like the wind, and I will soon be back."

Down to the bridge-like pass went the girl, by a path that had been cut and dug from the plateau downward, and over it she flew to the wooded spur beyond.

The top, or backbone of the pass, was a mere edge of rock, so narrow that a person standing upon it might drop a stone from either hand into the depths below; but she bounded across as lightly and with as sure a tread as if she were on solid ground.

When she reached the spur she stopped an instant, and waved an adieu to her father, who had remained at the edge of the plateau, anxiously watching her.

It was clear that she was a young woman who was accustomed to have her own way.

It was equally clear that she was well able to take care of herself.

Then she disappeared among the trees and bushes, and sped down the spur as lightly as she had crossed the pass.

She had spoken nothing less than the truth when she said that she could go like the wind, and her intention had been good enough when she contemplated an early return.

But she did not keep up the speed with which she had started.

Her flight was intermitted here and there as she stopped to examine some late bloom of autumn, or to admire the bright colors of autumn's falling leaves, or to inspect other attractions that caught her eye.

When she reached the forest at the foot of the spur she was surprised to see how late it was.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "What an idler I have been! I must hurry now, or father will be getting uneasy."

As she stepped lightly through the forest of tall trees toward the brook and the waterfall, she was surprised and startled by the sound of voices in that direction.

Men's voices!

Could it be that the campers on the lake who had vainly chased her had discovered her mode of retreat and the hiding-place of her canoe?

If so, what was to be done about it?

Cautiously she crept nearer the brook, and listened intently.

Soon her supposition was confirmed.

She was sure that the voice of one of the men was that of Hank Ward.

Why had he come there?

What had induced him to bring a stranger to that spot?

These were questions that ought to be answered, and she was anxious to find an answer to them.

Moreover, she knew that the stranger with Hank Ward was a young man, and she had a consuming but natural desire to see what he was like.

Would it be discreet to creep forward and take a look at him?

Doubtless it would not be discreet.

But feminine curiosity prevailed over discretion, and she crept forward.

When she reached the belt of bushes that lined the edge of the forest near the brook, she was obliged to stand up and part the foliage, so that she could see what was going on beyond there.

She saw two men, seated by the brook, and smoking their pipes.

One of them she recognized as Hank Ward, and the other must be the young stranger of whom Louis had spoken.

She looked closely at the stranger.

There was no use in looking at Hank Ward, with whose person she was already so well acquainted.

Of course she did not inspect the other because he was a young man, but simply because he was a stranger.

Her inspection was not very satisfactory, as his face was turned from her, and she was about to go away, when he suddenly rose to his feet.

There was a rifle in his hand as he rose, and he pointed it directly at her.

She did not scream or faint, but instinctively ducked her head, and shut her eyes.

The next moment the rifle was discharged, and she was unharmed.

She only knew that her eyes had been mis-

taken for those of a deer, and that Hank Ward had prevented the bullet from striking her.

No further concealment was possible.

She had been discovered, and must make the best she could of the situation.

"How you frightened me!" she said, as she stepped out from among the bushes.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HUNTED MAN.

CHARLEY CREED was stunned.

The thought that he had aimed and fired his rifle with deadly intent at that fair and sweet girl shocked him so that he was unable to speak, and could scarcely stand.

If she was frightened, he was terrified.

That he had mistaken her dark eyes for those of a deer, though perhaps complimentary to her, was no excuse for his rash and foolish act.

It was utterly inexcusable.

As she emerged from the bushes she gave her hand to the tall logger.

"I am very glad to see you, Hank," said she. "I knew that you had been camping out at the lake, but did not expect to find you here."

"I'm afeard, Miss Mattie," remarked Hank, "that when you heard that shot you thought we had laid out to give you a hot welcome."

"I heard the shot; but I hope that neither of you meant to fire at me."

"Of course we didn't. It was a mistake, you see. My young friend was minded to aim at a deer; but he might have hit you, and so—"

"I am exceedingly sorry," stammered the young man. "Hanging would be too good for me; but I really—"

"That'll do, Charley. That'll do. No use in makin' a fuss. The young lady understands it well enough. She knows that it was all a mistake, and that nobody wanted to harm her. You say, Miss Mattie, that you didn't expect to find me here. Well, you wouldn't ha' found me, if we hadn't been huntin' you. The fact is that my young friend here, Charley Creed—"

"Creed?" exclaimed the girl.

She started back in alarm, and her expression and attitude were full of apprehension.

"Creed, of Bangor, son of the senior partner of Creed & Ralston. But you needn't let that worry you, Miss Mattie. Charley's heart is all right, and so is his head, most of the time, though he is given to runnin' that end of him ag'inst stum walls. But I guess he might like to say a word for himself, and I must interjue you two. Miss Mattie, this is Charley Creed, a gentleman and a scholar, and I stand ready to bet on him. Charley, this is Miss Marley, daughter of the Solon Marley that we've talked about, and she's as good as she is pretty, which is a big thing to say."

The introduction was complete, and the guide grinned as he bowed with the grace of an elephant.

"We saw you on the lake in your canoe, Miss Marley," said the young man. "Hank Ward wanted to make me believe that you were a spook; but it was a spook that I was determined to find, and I persuaded him to go with me. The search led us here, and here we found your canoe, and now we have found yourself."

"But it's a long story, to put it all together," interrupted the guide.

Charley was so easily cowed since his recent terrible mistake, that he did not attempt to utter another word.

That exploit with the rifle had given the guide a vast advantage over him, and he could only hope that in time its effects might wear away.

"It's gittin' late too," continued Hank, "and somethin' must be done. As we are here, Miss Mattie, and have found you, I guess we'd better go up to see the old gentleman. I've got somethin' partic'lar to say to him, anyhow."

"I will be very glad," hesitated the girl—"if you think it is best."

"Well, you know that I wouldn't do anythin' ag'inst him, and I do think it best. Come, Charley; let's pull up our boat."

The canoe was drawn out on the land and concealed in the bushes, and Hemlock Hank requested Mattie Marley to lead the way.

"It is really getting late," said she—"almost dark—and I must ask you to step up lively. I will have to hurry, as I am sure that father is uneasy about me."

"Go as fast as you want to," replied Hank. "It will be queer if we can't keep up with a gal."

But it was no such easy matter to keep up with her.

She sped through the forest and up the mountain-side as lightly as a deer, passing over the difficult places with no apparent effort.

Her male companions were generally so far in the rear that they could not speak to her, and when they caught up they had not breath enough for conversation.

The darkness was getting thick when they came to the head of the spur and the pass that led to the plateau; but the girl scarcely halted there a second.

"You know this place, Hank," she said.

Then she skipped across so easily and gracefully that they could not help admiring her.

As for Charley Creed, his admiration was mixed with wonder, and he looked dubiously

at the narrow bridge of rock and the depth on either side.

"Think you can make the trip, sonny?" inquired Hemlock Hank.

"Well, I was never a tight-rope dancer, and this thing is new to me; but I will follow her, or give up the ghost."

He started boldly enough, and got safely across, though the razor-back bridge fairly made him shiver as he went over.

He had the pleasure of being received at the other end by Mattie Marley.

"I had forgotten you," she said. "I am so used to that pass, that I don't think how difficult the crossing may be to others."

A very complimentary reply rose to his lips; but he refrained from uttering it.

He had not yet recovered from the depression caused by that rifle shot.

By preceding her companions to the plateau she had a word of explanation for her father before they arrived.

Hank Ward was warmly welcomed by Solon Marley; but the old man frowned and looked troubled when Charley Creed was presented to him.

"It's all right," insisted Hank. "Nothin' to worry about, Mr. Marley, Charley is my friend, and yours, too."

They were invited into the cabin to a good hot supper, and during the meal the guide told how they had happened to meet Mattie at the falls, but considerably avoided mention of the shooting incident.

The girl, too, made no allusion to it, and Charley Creed felt considerably relieved.

"Charley and I had talked about you, old gentleman," continued Hank, "and I knew that his heart and his head were both correct on that point; but I wasn't anxious to bring him up here without leave from you, and so I kinder discouraged him."

"I told him that what we saw on the lake was a spook, and I gave him a heavy dose of the Injuns' yarns about old Katahdin."

"But he didn't discourage much, as he was bound to hunt the spook, though I threatened to go away and leave him; so I had to give in."

"When he found the canoe at the foot of the falls, he vowed that he meant to camp right there until the spook came, and sure enough she came."

"Let a young chap git on the track of a gal, and it's surprisin' how he can foller it."

The girl in question turned away her head, and Charley Creed blushed visibly.

"Does he not believe that I was guilty of that crime?" inquired Solon Marley, a little timidly.

"He don't know nothin' about it, himself; but I've told him that you are innocent, and that settles it."

"As Mr. Marley is innocent," suggested Charley, "he ought not to hide himself and his daughter away up here in this mountain."

"I must hide from the law," answered Solon Marley. "Appearances are so strong against me that I cannot trust myself in its grasp. The web that has been woven is so tangled that I am afraid it can never be straightened out. I could not stand a trial, for fear I would be found guilty."

"But why should you have to stand anything of the kind?" urged Charley. "I am sure that my father would not press a charge against you."

"I suppose you are right about that, young gentleman. Your father is a kind and good man. Whether he believes me to be guilty or not, he would let me go in peace."

"Who is it, then, that is so bitter against you?"

"My brother-in-law, Stephen Ralston—my dead sister's husband. Since her death he has never ceased to persecute me, and I believe that he would be glad to hunt me to my death. There were forgeries committed—no doubt of that—and he was able to fasten them upon me. The proof was sufficient for the grand jury and the officers of the law. I could do nothing but fly and hide."

"But how long is this to last?" demanded the young man. "You are not always to stay here, I hope."

"I cannot say. I would prefer not to speak of the matter any more. I think of it until it drives me wild. I am always praying; but there comes no answer to my prayers."

After this there was silence for a while.

Then Hemlock Hank brought up the subject of the spook again, and told of the whirlwind on the lake, by which he and his young friend had been caught.

This led Mr. Marley to speak of Mattie's excursions in that quarter, and of the trouble they had given him.

"You must know, my dear," said he, "that I am unwilling to deprive you of any pleasures you can find in these solitudes; but I am afraid that your canoeing is quite too risky. Besides, as you are now aware, you are liable to be followed."

"That's jest it," interrupted Hank. "I guess I will have to jine you, old gentleman, in advisin' Miss Mattie to quit that sort o' thing for a while. About this time, in partic'lar, she might be folloed, and it might lead to trouble."

"Why at this time in particular?" inquired the girl.

"Because there's trouble on the wing, huntin' a place to 'light."

The guide went on to tell of his meeting with the party of loggers on the river, and of the information he had received from them concerning Dick Ridsen, the detective, and his errand.

Solon Marley was greatly distressed by this news.

"My guess was, Solon, that he had been sent by Steve Ralston to hunt you," suggested Hank.

"Yes, it must be so. No other person would persecute me so relentlessly. Why does he do it? Why should my sister's husband hate me so?"

"So you see, Miss Mattie," resumed the guide, "that you can't be too keefer about this time. You ought to be safe enough here; but that man would never have come unless he had some sort of clew, and he is mighty keen on the trail."

The Indian, who had been intently listening to this conversation, then spoke up sharply.

"Louis find 'em, an' kill 'em."

"No, Louis," replied the old gentleman. "You must not think of such a thing. Whatever happens, we must have no bloodshed. You must not speak of killing."

"Louis find 'em, anyhow—him and Auguste."

CHAPTER XII.

SOL BARNES IN TROUBLE.

"DARN all b'ars, anyhow! That's what I say. Darn 'em to darnation!"

It was Solomon Barnes who "darned" the whole ursine race so savagely.

Zeb Carter's timber-hunting party of three had been reinforced by four more men from below, with a four-ox team and a heavy load of provisions and other necessities.

They had finished their prospecting, and had located a timber grant for the work of the coming winter.

But they had some long and laborious tasks before them yet, sufficient to keep them busy until the season of snow and ice set in.

They had been obliged to gather and cure and stock large quantities of wild grass from the meadows and swamps along the river for use of the cattle through the winter; but that task had been concluded.

It was also necessary to improve the channels of a few small streams for the purpose of floating logs on them, by damming them in some places, and by removing rocks in other places.

Then they would have to erect winter-quarters for a large party of loggers and their cattle.

As these operations would cover a considerable space of time, and as they were to be conducted within a comparatively small range, the lumbermen had erected a temporary camp on one of the beautiful streams that form the headwaters of the Penobscot.

"Darn all b'ars, I say ag'in!" mournfully exclaimed Sol Barnes, as he stood in front of the camp in the gray light of the morning and looked grimly at a serious spectacle that was there presented to his view.

"You may darn 'em, an' darn 'em, but you'll never mend their manners," mildly remarked Luke Schooley.

The tall and lanky lumberman looked at the short and fat one as if he would like to cook and eat him, but evidently considered his undignified speech worthy of no further notice.

Then he again looked solemnly at the sad spectacle.

The spectacle was one which was calculated to depress him into even a lower stage of melancholy than he usually enjoyed.

On the ground near him was a torn and scattered assortment of a logger's winter outfit, including, besides the customary garments, boots, mittens, comforters, and even shaving tools and a Bible.

These articles were the property of Sol Barnes, and had been brought to him by the last arrival from below.

It was a superstition of his that his outfit needed an occasional sunning.

Therefore he had hung it, canvas knapsack and all, well up on the front side of the camp, as that side faced the south.

At night he had forgotten to take it in.

When he emerged in the morning he saw his belongings strewn upon the ground in sad confusion.

He had not to look far for the author of the calamity.

At a little distance from the camp a black bear was leisurely trotting away, carrying in his mouth a remnant of the torn knapsack.

Barnes hurried back to get a gun, but when he reappeared the predatory brute had disappeared, and it was useless to attempt to follow him without a dog.

The other members of the party came out, and their condolence with the afflicted logger was badly mixed with rough jokes at his expense.

To him the loss was no sort of a joke, as it represented a loss of money, and as he might

suffer from cold before he could send word to his home and get back another outfit.

Evidently the bear had taken down the knapsack, and had opened it to examine its contents.

Finding nothing that suited his fancy, he had in his disgust demolished them one by one, even chewing up the handle of a razor.

"It's b'ars, an' b'ars, an' allus b'ars!" wrathfully exclaimed Sol. "They're the trickiest an' peskiest varmints on airtb. What did that darned crittur want to make a ruination of my things for, anyhow? He couldn't eat 'em, an' he couldn't wear 'em. 'Twas nothin' but the meanest kind o' mischief."

"Mebbe he wanted to swap," suggested Luke.

"Then he orter took off his hide fu'st."

"I shouldn't wonder," observed Zeb Carter, "if that was the very bear that followed us up from the lower river, watching for chances to git hoid of little things. He has found us out now, and means to keep us in mind. His curiosity is ahead of Eve's, and his wickedness beats Cain's. Nothin' will be safe from him now, until we can contrive some scheme to git rid of him."

Sol Barnes declared his intention of watching for the bear and making an end of him.

"Better let me fix him," said Luke. "There's lots o' fun to be got out o' bears."

"I'd like to see you foolin' with one of 'em," replied Sol. "There might be some fun in that, if there's any fun anywhere in this wicked world."

"Don't sour on the world too heavy, Sol. Come in an' git your breakfast, and your heart may feel lighter as your stomach grows heavier. If you run short of breeches, I'll lend you a pair o' mine."

The idea of Sol Barnes attired in Luke Schooley's nether garments produced an explosion of laughter, and put all the party but Sol in a good-humor.

It was a common saying that when Sol Barnes got anything into his head, it was bound to stick, even if it was something that ought to be removed with a fine comb.

The notion of making an end of the bear that robbed him had taken full possession of him.

During the day, while the men were at work, when Sol was more than usually taciturn and gloomy, it was understood that he was meditating the destruction of the bear.

At night he secured one of the two rifles that the party possessed, and took his station near the door of the cabin, but inside, to watch for the beast.

While his comrades were sunk in slumber so deep that only the chorus of their combined snores gave evidence of their existence, Sol Barnes was supposed to be wide awake and on watch.

He was on watch, whether he was wide awake or not.

He might have closed one eye in sleep; but he could be depended on to keep both ears wide open.

To such good effect did he keep his ears open, that toward morning he was aroused by a scratching against the walls of the cabin, and then by a noise on the roof.

He was sure that it was the bear, and silently stole out with his rifle and with deadly intent.

If the bear was on the roof, he would have a good chance for a shot; but it puzzled him to guess why the beast should have gone up there.

Possibly he did not know that a keg of molasses had been placed on the roof for safe-keeping.

But the bear knew it.

When the time comes when a predatory bear cannot discover a keg of molasses and get at it, that will be a cold day for bears.

It was a partly-cloudy night that the lanky lumberman encountered outside of the cabin; but there was light enough to enable him to see a dark object on the roof.

The object was considerably blacker than the night, and it was also in motion.

There could be no doubt that it was a bear, if not the identical brute that had previously made trouble, and Sol prepared to give him such a dose of lead as should cure him of thieving.

Getting close to the cabin at the rear side, he rested his rifle on the edge of the sloping roof, took a careful aim at what he supposed to be a vital part of the bear, and fired.

The result was a howl, a tumble, and a yell.

The howl issued from the throat of the startled and indignant bear.

The tumble was that of the body of the bear as it rolled down the roof and pitched to the ground.

The yell was forced from the lips of Sol Barnes as the big body fell upon him.

CHAPTER XIII.

"WHERE IS HEMLOCK HANK?"

THE shot, and the howl and the shriek together caused all the occupants of the cabin to tumble up and hurry out.

On the ground at the rear of the building they found Sol Barnes in a pitiable condition.

The bear had fallen upon him from off the old roof, nearly crushing him by its weight.

At the same time he had been badly scratched by the animal in its frantic efforts to get away. But that was not the worst of it.

"Help!" he shouted, as his comrades came up. "Get a doctor, quick! Take off the b'ar!"

"What is the matter with you, Sol?" calmly inquired Zeb Carter.

"I shot the b'ar, and the b'ar has killed me. Be quick! I'm bleedin' to death."

"Where are you hurt?"

"All over. On my head and everywhere. The blood is pourin' from me. Jest feel it."

While some went for lights, others examined the wounded man.

They found him drenched with a clammy, sticky fluid, that had covered his head, filled his face and eyes, and flowed down over his garments.

"You seem to be right lively for a dead man," remarked Carter; "but such a sight of blood is really amazin'."

"Mebbe it's the bear's blood," suggested another.

"I hope it ain't Sol's, anyhow."

"It's molasses!" cried Luke Schooley, who had happened to carry his hand to his mouth after feeling of his bleeding comrade.

The next moment he stumbled over the keg of molasses, nearly empty, and that satisfied him of the nature of the calamity.

"The consarned critter war up there stealin' our molasses when Sol shot at him," said he.

Torches were brought from the fire in front of the cabin, and the spectacle that Sol Barnes presented caused the entire party to burst into a roar of laughter.

From head to foot he was dripping with molasses, and the sticky stuff that had trickled down over his face compelled him to keep his eyes closed.

It was clear that the bear, surprised at the beginning of his feast, and pained by the sting of the shot, had fallen down and off the roof, bringing with him the keg of molasses.

He had not only dropped upon poor Sol Barnes, but had emptied the molasses over him.

An examination of Sol by the light of the torches showed that there was blood mingled with the molasses upon his person; but it was hoped that it might be the blood of Bruin, as it was evident that the beast had been badly wounded.

What had become of the bear?

The line of his retreat could be easily distinguished by a trail of blood; but it was not worth while to pursue him in the darkness.

"I'm willin' to bet that he won't go far," observed Zeb Carter, "and we can look him up after daylight. You gave him a sockdolager, Sol—no mistake about that. Come around to the front, now, and we will try to clean you off."

By dint of soaking and scrubbing, the hero of the night was fairly cleaned of the sweet and sticky stuff, and it was then perceived that his hurts were of little consequence.

But the operation took so much time that daylight had come when it was finished, and there was no chance for him to retire upon his laurels and his couch of spruce boughs.

"I dunno," remarked Luke Schooley, "but it might ha' paid us better to b'ile him down and have a sugarin' off."

Barnes gave him an ugly look.

"Now, Sol, don't scowl like that. A man who has been sweetened down like you have oughtn't to sour on the world any more."

It was thought best to get breakfast out of the way before going to hunt Sol's bear, and that meal was duly prepared, eaten, and smoked over.

Sol Barnes had relapsed into his usual state of gloom and taciturnity.

Even if he had killed the bear, he could not congratulate himself on the result of the encounter, as the only garments that were left to him were completely soaked with molasses.

"All the better for that, Sol," observed Luke Schooley. "Twill make 'em tight. Most as good as if you was caulked and tarred."

They set out to follow the track of the bear, taking the two rifles, loaded so that they would be sure to do execution, at one end or the other.

The bloody trail was plain enough, but was longer than they had expected it to be.

It was conceded that the brute was possessed of unusual tenacity of life, or that he was not as badly wounded as he was supposed to be.

At a distance of nearly two miles from their camp they came to a thicket, into which the trail led, and there could scarcely be a doubt that the bear was in there, alive or dead.

They were proceeding to surround the thicket and beat the bushes for Bruin, when they suddenly came in sight of his body, in the open ground on the other side of the patch.

Not the dead bear only, but two men who stood near him.

A white man and an Indian.

Dick Ridsen and Auguste—the same men whom they had met down the river.

Zeb Carter was about to advance and greet them, when Sol Barnes flared up.

"Leave that b'ar alone! What are you doin' to him? That's my b'ar."

"How long have you owned him?" inquired the detective.

"I shot him last night. He stole my clothes."

"He don't seem to be wearing any of them."

"Never you mind. He belongs to me."

"You are welcome to him. I haven't lost any bears."

Dick Ridsen was warmly welcomed by the loggers, who were hungry for news.

But he had none to give them—at least, none of the sort they were seeking.

He had been in the woods as long as they had, and had received no communications from the outside world.

The bear was skinned and dressed, and his hide, with the best portions of his meat, was carried to the camp.

Thither Dick Ridsen and his follower accompanied the loggers.

On the way he heard the story of the depredations of the bear and his tragi-comical end—a story which afforded amusement to all but Sol Barnes.

But nothing ever amused Sol.

At the camp they had a brief smoke and chat before the loggers went to their work.

"Seen anythin' of that mau you were huntin', Mr. Ridsen?" inquired Zeb Carter.

"No, and I am inclined to give up the job, as I have had nothing but bad luck so far, and winter is coming on."

He went on to tell of the hurricane he had encountered near the foot of Katahdin, and the storm and torrent that had struck him in attempting to ascend the mountain.

"Those things are common enough about here," remarked Carter. "They don't worry men that's used to 'em. But winter is comin' on, as you say, and huntin' for a needle in a haystack is apt to be tiresome work."

"No doubt of that—especially if the needle doesn't happen to be there. By the way, Mr. Carter, where is Hemlock Hank?"

"Darned if I know," answered Zeb, a little taken aback by this sudden and unexpected query.

"I believe that he usually comes up into the pine woods at this time of the year, and I thought that he might be somewhere in this neighborhood."

"He might, and he might not."

Sol Barnes spoke up and blurted out some facts, in spite of the frowns of his leader.

"We met him as we was comin' up the river, arter we saw you. He was in a canoe with a young chap from Bangor. I don't know what has become of him; but I can tell where you'll be apt to hear of him, if he's about this part o' the kentry."

"Where is that?"

"At Hubbard's. I will show you the way there, if you want."

"Is that what you're hired for, Sol Barnes?" growled Zeb Carter.

"Never mind," said the detective. "Of course Auguste knows the place."

Ridsen and his follower went their way after the little chat, and the loggers proceeded to their work.

As they went Zeb Carter spoke to Sol Barnes severely about his recent exhibition of freshness.

"What did you mean by openin' your darned old pertater-trap when nobody wanted you to speak?"

"As how?" replied Sol.

"Tellin' all you know, and more, too, about Hank Ward."

"It seemed like you didn't know."

"Seemed, did it? It must have seemed to anybody who had a bit of common sense, that I didn't care to tell all I knew. What business has such a man as that with Hemlock Hank, anyhow?"

"I don't purtend to say."

"You are no friend of Hank's," suggested Luke Schooley, "when you put a detective on his track?"

"Did I ever purtend to be a friend of his'n?"

"You had better not be his enemy."

"Mebbe there's two opinions about that."

CHAPTER XIV.

ANOTHER BEAR STORY.

HEMLOCK HANK and Charley Creed seemed to have settled themselves at "The Outlook," as Mattie Marley had named the plateau on which her home was situated.

The young gentleman from Bangor was well satisfied to remain there.

Because, as he said, there was such splendid hunting in that vicinity, as well as such delightful fishing in the mountain streams, and because he anticipated much pleasure in exploring old Katahdin, not having the fear of Pamolah before his eyes.

Because, as he might have said, this cause of his satisfaction being plain enough to the others, he could there enjoy the companionship of Mattie Marley.

He and Hank had brought up their shelter-tent and most of their belongings, and they soon made themselves quite at home on the plateau.

This arrangement was not objected to by

Solon Marley, who was pleased with everything that pleased his daughter, and who easily allowed her to rule him if she would only permit him to remain where he was.

Besides, he believed most thoroughly and implicitly in the friendship and truth of Hemlock Hank.

It was not objected to by Mattie, who was glad enough to have company in that solitude—especially such a friend as Hank Ward, and perhaps more especially, such a nice young man as Charley Creed.

There was only one person on the plateau who appeared to object to it.

That was Louis, the Indian, Solon Marley's hunter and handy man.

His objection may have been more apparent than real; but it is certain that he scowled at Charley Creed, and in other ways intimated that the young man's presence there was distasteful to him.

"I wonder why Louis dislikes me so," he said to the girl one day. "Do you know what is the matter with him?"

"It is not that he likes you less," answered Mattie, "but that he likes me more. That is all that is the matter with Louis."

"Is he jealous, then?"

"I suppose it is something like that. Louis is very fond of me, and is always anxious to do anything he can to please me. If I wanted an admirer, I could be sure of finding one in Louis."

"But he is no admirer of mine."

"I don't know about that, Mr. Creed. If you were in danger, and I gave him the word, he would go to his death to serve you. But he would probably scowl and look sour at you, just the same."

"You are the one, then, who absorbs all his sweetness. I must try to get on the sunny side of him."

Though Charley Creed professed to be an enthusiastic hunter, he did not seem to enjoy the sport that Katahdin afforded unless he had company to help him appreciate it.

The company that he desired was that of Mattie Marley.

She, though a dweller in the wilderness, was no hunter.

That is, she did not possess a rifle, and had never fired any larger weapon than a pistol.

But she was vastly fond of roaming the forests and climbing the mountain, and was generally more than willing to accompany any person who proposed a hunt or a tramp.

When anything happened to prevent her from undertaking a hunting excursion, it might have been noticed that Charley Creed speedily lost interest in the affair.

One day a deer-hunt was arranged, and Mattie Marley was both able and eager to go.

There could be no objection to this, as there was to be a party of three, one of whom was Hemlock Hank.

Louis was left at home to take care of the old gentleman, who, as Mattie explained, was apt to be queer at times, when he happened to be brooding over his troubles, and could not always be relied on to take proper care of himself.

The morning was bright and frosty, and the air was keen, but clear and exhilarating.

They were going to a deer-pass, so-called—a deep and narrow valley in the congeries of mountains, through which the deer were wont to pass on their way to water.

The location of this pass had been made known to them by Louis, who was on the best of terms with Hank Ward, and the Indian's instructions easily enabled the guide to find it.

Hank Ward took the lead, keeping an eye out, like the wary old campaigner that he was, in all directions at once.

Perhaps he did not keep a very close watch upon the rear, in which direction Charley Creed and Mattie Marley were following him at a little distance, evidently more absorbed in each other than in their surroundings.

The forest might have been full of deer, for all the good those two would have got out of them.

They reached the pass in good time, and concealed themselves to await the coming of the game.

And they had not long to wait.

A fine buck, suspecting no sort of harm, came walking leisurely down the pass.

But the first intimation that the young people had of his presence was the crack of Hemlock Hank's rifle.

The tall woodsman had taken good aim as the antlered beauty slowly approached him, and had sent a death-shot into his brown hide.

Forward bounded the buck, the instinct of escape strong within him in spite of his mortal wound, with his head thrown up, his antlers high in air, and the blood streaming from his breast upon the fallen leaves.

Charley raised his rifle, but did not need the girl's eager entreaty to refrain from shooting.

It was plain that the deer's time had come.

Only a few bounds he made, and sunk upon the ground near where the young folks were concealed.

The three gathered around him, and Hemlock

Hank gave him the *coup de grace* with his hunting knife.

"What a sweet creature!" exclaimed Mattie. "What a pity to kill him!"

"Yes, it is a pity to kill him," answered Charley; "but it is a fine thing to have him when he is killed and dressed. Let us go up the pass while Hank attends to him, and perhaps we may meet another. You know that we are nearly out of meat at The Outlook."

The girl was ready enough to comply with this request, as she declared that they were not at all likely to see another deer that morning, and the two went up the pass, out of sight of the guide.

They did not see another deer; but they saw something else.

Near a fallen log at the side of the valley were two funny little black objects, rolling and tossing and tumbling about, quite unconscious of the approach of anything that might harm them.

They were recognized at once as cub bears at play.

No grown-up bear was at hand to watch or restrain them, and they were having a grand time all to themselves.

"Oh, the precious darlings!" exclaimed Mattie. "I would so like to get one of them and take it home."

"You shall have them both if you want them," said Charley, who had fallen into the habit of considering her slightest wish a command.

He hastened to get them, and found it easy to catch the fat and clumsy cubs.

But, when he had caught them, it was quite another thing to keep them, and he soon discovered that one of them was quite as much as he cared to manage.

The cub resented his intrusion upon its sport and freedom, scratching and clawing and biting like a vicious cat and in a very vigorous manner.

At the same time both of them uttered piteous cries, which could be heard at a considerable distance.

They were heard, and not at a great distance, by the mother of the little brutes, which quit feeding on frosted berries, and hastened to their rescue.

"Please drop them!" cried the girl. "I am sure that I don't want the cross little wretches."

But Charley had "got his dander up," and was determined to capture the cubs and subdue them.

"Don't bother with them any more," pleaded Mattie. "For my sake, please let them go. I am afraid."

Hardly had she spoken when she had something to be afraid of.

With a rush and a fierce growl the she bear came crashing through the bushes, and charged upon Charley Creed, her mouth open, and her eyes full of fire.

The girl screamed at the top of her voice, and hesitated, as if afraid to stay where she was, but loth to leave her friend.

Charley dropped the cub as if it burned his fingers, and picked up his rifle.

It was well loaded for deer, and he was cool and collected enough to take good aim.

He fired, and sent the charge into the breast of the brute at short range.

She partly halted, as if astonished, and then rushed forward again.

Charley had not another load, and there was nothing for him but flight.

"Run, Mattie!" he shouted. "Run as fast as you can!"

Away they went, with the bear after them.

But Hank Ward, who heard the girl's cry, had seized his rifle and hastened to meet them.

"Go on!" he ordered, and dropped on one knee as they passed him.

Taking careful aim, he sent into the advancing bear a bullet that broke one of her fore-legs and penetrated to a vital portion of her anatomy.

"All right," shouted Hank, as he perceived the effect of his shot.

"We won't be troubled any more by that bear," he said, as he proceeded to cut the throat of the dying beast.

But there was another bear that was sure to make trouble for them.

It was a he-bear, presumably the father of the cubs, and he came rushing down the hillside to the rescue of his mate, but too late to be of service to her.

But he was not too late for mischief, and he charged upon the group with vengeful intent.

"Run, Mattie!" shouted Hemlock Hank.

"Run, both of you! I will take care of this one."

Surely there was nothing for it but to run, as both rifles were unloaded.

The girl ran, but the guide did not.

No more did Charley Creed, who was not the sort of fellow that would desert a friend.

He retreated a few steps, and hastily began to pour powder and ball into his rifle.

As the bear rushed on, Hemlock Hank backed up against a tree in the path of the brute, drew the long and sharp hunting-knife with which he had been skinning the deer, and awaited his onset.

The bear flew upon him, wild with rage, growling fiercely, and with his savage mouth wide open.

Suddenly he rose on his hind-feet, and encircled both the tree and the man with his big and cruel paws, while his hot breath was poured into the face of his intended victim, and his formidable teeth proclaimed his deadly purpose.

Quite as suddenly the scene changed. While the tree prevented the bear from giving his fatal hug, and before he had a chance to use his jaws, Hemlock Hank with his sharp knife ripped open the belly of the beast, and his entrails poured out upon the ground.

Charley Creed ran up with his reloaded gun.

As the bear tottered backward, the young man placed his rifle against his head, and sent a bullet through his brain.

That ended the encounter, and Hank Ward stepped forth unharmed.

The result of the expedition was two bears and a deer.

All were skinned and dressed, and Hank and Charley carried home the pelts and part of the meat, after hanging up the rest out of the reach of wolves to await their return.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BIRTHPLACE OF STORMS.

A VAST basin, miles in circumference, at a considerable elevation above the forest land, shut in by heights that were nearly precipitous on all sides but one, and in places perhaps two thousand feet high.

A grand exhibition of the forces and wonders of nature.

Where its nearly level surface was not taken up by lovely lakes, it was covered by great blocks of granite, doubtless such as had fallen from its rocky sides, many of them as square as if they had been blocked out by careful quarrymen.

Trees in abundance were rooted among the rocks, and the edges of the lakes were beautifully fringed with birches and alders and other growth peculiar to the region.

It was the big basin of Katahdin.

Into this abode of mystery two pigmies had penetrated.

At least, they had the appearance of pigmies, as they wandered among the great masses of rock or stood in the shadow of the gigantic cliffs, showing themselves in contrast with the mighty works of nature.

They were Dick Ridsen and Auguste.

The detective had succeeded in persuading his follower to go up into the mountains, the Indian's desire for money having for the time overcome his superstitious fears.

When they reached the basin, however, Auguste was in a sadly demoralized condition.

"Dis where ole Pamolah lib, Missa Ridsen," he said in frightened tones. "He play de debbil wid Injun here."

"Go and soak your head, you great goose! I wish I had nothing to worry me but that boggy of a Pamolah. This is a splendid place for camping, Auguste, and I mean to stay right here until my work is done. Here we find plenty of wood and water and everything we want, and it is so handy for exploring the mountain. It is the very spot that suits me, and if you don't like it you can light out as soon as you want to."

Auguste would have been glad to leave the basin, the sooner the better; but he could not bear the thought of losing the money he had earned and the further amount that he expected to earn.

Ridsen selected his camping-ground at the base of a cliff and near a lovely stream that ran into one of the lakes.

The first day of his residence there he devoted to an exploration of the basin, especially with regard to ways of exit and of ascent to the higher ranges of the mountain.

Early the next morning he set out with Auguste to examine another portion of the mountain, and to find the place where, as his follower had told him, he had tracked the Indian who went up with supplies for the hunted man.

Thus far, during the day and night, Pamolah had behaved very well, and had given no cause of alarm even to Auguste.

It is true that they had noticed clouds arising on the lakes and whirling away swiftly in various directions, but these evidences of the demon's energy had been of small dimensions and not disposed to do any damage.

As they went out of the basin that morning, through the pass by which they had entered it, they were treated to a small sample of Pamolah's power.

A cloud had arisen on the largest of the lakes, from which point, when it had formed itself sufficiently, and had got its machinery in motion, it started at something more than railroad speed toward the pass.

The first intimation they had of its approach, was a roaring noise behind them.

Looking back, they saw a funnel-shaped cloud, as black as ink, whirling toward them, and headed for the pass.

Wedge in there between two high hills, it

was impossible to escape, and there was nothing for them to do but endure the blow, the force of which they both appreciated.

Auguste threw himself down behind a rock, squeezing his body up against that shelter, and Dick Ridsen followed his example.

Hardly had they got in position when the whirlwind swept through the pass with a terrible roaring and a great commotion of trees and stones and brush and dust.

For a moment or so it was difficult to breathe, and only the shelter of the rock saved the men from being swept away or seriously injured.

The storm seemed to be a water-spout, as well as a whirlwind.

The cloud was heavily charged with water from the lake, which was partly or wholly emptied out as it flew through the pass, wetting Ridsen and his follower as thoroughly as if they had passed under a cataract.

But it disappeared as suddenly as it came, and they got up and undertook the unpleasant task of wringing the water out of their clothes, lest they should freeze in the frosty air.

"Pamolah ole debbil," muttered Auguste, using no stronger expression for fear of arousing the anger of his companion.

"I have heard," answered the detective, "that the basin in there is known as the birthplace of storms, and I judge that it is rightly named. If your Pamolah is the father of the storms that are raised there, he has a rough lot of children. But I suppose that we are liable to come across his brats in one place as well as in another."

"Guess we find plenty ob 'em 'fore we froo," remarked the Indian.

They climbed up and down the mountain-side, and skirted around its base, crossing streams and ravines and ridges, and completely exhausting themselves in their efforts to get ahead and cover as much ground as possible before night-fall.

Dick Ridsen became disgusted at times, and almost discouraged.

"I wonder, Auguste," he said at last, "if you really know anything about that place to which you are pretending to take me."

"Find 'um 'fore long," answered the Indian.

"If I thought you had been lying to me, you degenerate son of an unregenerated race, I would dig a grave right here, and would soon furnish the corpse for the funeral."

"Injun no lie. Find 'um 'fore long. Katahdin mighty big place. Take heap time to look for one man here."

As they went on, and Auguste expressed himself as satisfied that he was nearing the location he was seeking, they could not help noticing that the sky had become overcast.

No clouds were visible as they looked up through the forest trees, and anything like the haze of Indian Summer could not be expected at that time of the year.

Yet the air was so thick and heavy that it must surely be loaded with oppressive matter of some kind.

Soon they were made aware of the smell of smoke.

"Wonder w'ot ole Pamolah doin' now," muttered the Indian.

"There must be a big forest fire somewhere," said Ridsen. "If so, it is likely to make a big sweep, as everything is so dry."

They went on without regard to the supposed forest fire.

As they saw nothing of it, it was reasonable to conclude that it was not near them.

At last they reached a spur of the mountain which Auguste recognized, or claimed that he recognized.

He walked about in the forest below, and examined the locality from several points of view, before he expressed himself as being solidly satisfied.

"Injun got 'um now," he said. "Louis went up dis place."

Ridsen also examined the foot of the spur, and went up a little way.

"There is no path or trail here," said he.

"Guess not, Louis heap sharp. Make 'um no trail fur white man to foller. But he went up dis place. Mebbe so he not dere now."

"Did he go up there with the bundles you spoke of?"

"Yes."

"Then he must be up there somewhere now, or the man for whom he brought the bundles is there."

The detective walked back to an open space in the forest, from which he could get a good view of the mountain, and carefully examined its seamy side, as if from his position he would be able to see anything in particular up there.

Soon his eyes fastened on the side of a peak whose top seemed to reach the sky.

"Look, Auguste!" he eagerly exclaimed.

"Look up yonder, where I point. Don't you see something moving there on the mountain-side?"

The Indian looked, and shook his head.

If any living thing was visible from that distance, it was not in motion just then.

The air had become thicker and heavier, and every moment the smell of smoke grew more

palpable and more oppressive as a breeze bore it down the mountain side.

"Look, Auguste!" again exclaimed the detective. "Your eyes ought to be better than mine; but I doubt if they are. Look as I point! Can't you see something moving there?"

There was a little black mite up there, if not two of them; but it was only by its change of position that anything could be discovered.

"Mebbe so Injun see somefin now," replied Auguste, but with the air of wishing to please his employer, rather than as if convinced of the truth of his statement.

The next moment he did see something.

Both of them saw it.

It was not one or two black mites, but a tongue of flame that had suddenly crept around what seemed to be a corner of the peak.

The next moment the tongue was a blaze that grew and spread with amazing rapidity.

CHAPTER XVI.

ROUGH DEALS FOR RISDEN.

As Dick Ridsen stood and gazed at the fire that flashed out and spread on the mountain-side, his face wore a startled and at the same time an anxious look.

If he had really discovered anything up there, it would be a shame to have his discovery swept away by a forest fire.

But he was convinced that that was what was destined to happen.

There seemed to be a strong breeze behind the blaze, that sent it rushing and roaring through the trees and shrubs up there, until the tongue of flame developed into a vast conflagration.

In a very short time the entire mountain-side was covered with fire that shot upward, and with smoke that obscured the sky.

The place where the detective had seen, or imagined that he saw, the two little black mites, was surrounded and swept by the fierce flames.

"If there were any people up there," mournfully remarked Ridsen, "they must have been swept away before now."

It was then near night, and darkness came more quickly because of the clouds of smoke that filled the air.

At that hour it was useless to think of attempting to get back to the place from which they had come.

"We will camp right here to-night," said the detective, "and in the morning we will go up there and see what there is to be seen."

This was an unpleasant prospect; but Auguste accepted it with resignation.

At the worst it was much better than going back to the big basin and defying the power of Pamolah.

Dick Ridsen was sincere and determined in his intention of going up the mountain the next morning to pursue his investigations.

But circumstances prevented him from carrying it into effect.

He and his follower built a big fire, and laid down on the hard and cold ground, with their feet to the fire.

In spite of the discomforts of the situation, they slept soundly for a few hours.

Then the cold worried them no more, as they were awakened by a feeling of intense heat, which could not have been caused by their fire.

It was accompanied by crackling and roaring sounds, by frequent crashes of falling trees, and by vast volumes of smoke.

They were nearly suffocated when they awoke and perceived that they had been overtaken by the forest fire.

While they were reposing it had swept down the mountain-side, and had attacked the forest below, where it found plenty of fuel in the masses of pine needles, the dry leaves and twigs, and the sapless trees and bushes.

Then its march was rapid until it overtook the sleepers.

Suddenly aroused from their slumbers, the spectacle that was presented to their astonished gaze was nearly enough to paralyze them.

The fire had not crept upon them, but had rushed at them with race-horse speed, and was still hurrying forward, gaining in force and intensity as it went.

A few minutes more of sleep, and it would have swallowed them up.

At the same time it was taking possession of the forest on all sides, and the situation was one of great peril, calling for quick thought and immediate action.

Already they were nearly surrounded by flame.

They could only save their lives by flight.

There was but one opening in the circle of fire, and through that they dashed, soon putting themselves beyond the immediate reach of the conflagration.

But they were compelled to keep on running, and to choose their course wisely, for fear of being again overtaken or surrounded by the flames.

The wind was a north wind, sending the fire southward, and they edged off in an easterly direction, so as to get out of range of the burning belt.

In this they succeeded, but by dint of hard work, and at the expense of various scratches

and bruises which they got by running through the bushes and stumbling over fallen trees in the darkness.

When they had reached what they believed to be a place of safety, the detective turned and gazed at the burning mountain, which from that distance looked like a mass of fire and smoke.

"We won't be able to go up there for a day or two at best," said he, "and all we can do now is to go back to the basin and see if the camp is safe there."

They rested until daylight, when they made a breakfast of the food they had brought with them, and started on their return journey.

It was a long and tedious tramp, and it was not until afternoon that they reached the pass which led into the basin.

They had found no indications of fire along their route, and the basin was entirely safe and apparently as they had left it.

"It is a good thing to know that we are all right here," remarked Ridsen.

"Pamolah heap smart—don't want to burn hisse'f up," replied the Indian.

"Why, Auguste, you are a bigger goose than I took you to be, and that is saying considerable. Do you really mean to give your demon the credit of that fire? If I should have a sore toe, I suppose you would hold him responsible for that."

"Pamolah heap smart," muttered the Indian.

Everything seemed to be right when they got up into the basin; but when they reached their camping-place they discovered that something had occurred in their absence.

They had left their tent hanging there between two trees; but it was not as they had left it.

It was still there, but had been cut to pieces—literally shredded.

An examination soon showed them that a knife had been used upon it, cutting it down from the trees, and then slitting it up, so that its usefulness was entirely destroyed.

"Who's been here since I've been gone?" whistled the detective.

"Pamolah heap smart," the Indian again declared.

"Auguste, I've a great mind to break your head. You infernal, thick-skull aborigine, can't you see that this work has been done with a knife? Does your demon of a Pamolah carry knives? Some rascally Indian or white man has come here, and has cut up my tent, just to make mischief."

The detective reflected a moment, and struck another conclusion.

"It may be—by Jove! I might have thought of that sooner—that the man I am seeking has got on my trail, or some of his friends have, and that this is part of a scheme to drive me away. Hello, Auguste! what have you found there?"

The Indian was standing there, with a look of horror on his face, and pointing at an object near him which the detective had not yet observed.

Ridsen went to the object and examined it.

It was an arrow, cut from a thin slab of white cedar, fastened in a split stick that was stuck in the ground, and pointing toward the pass by which they had entered the basin.

On the feather of the arrow was the rude figure of a snake, with its head pointing in the same direction.

"Pamolah been here hisse'f," said the Indian.

"Dat he totem."

"Oh, that is the old cuss's totem, is it? His hand and seal, as the lawyers say. I was never afraid of snakes, Auguste. I suppose he means that he wants us to get out of here."

Auguste nodded.

"Well, I don't mean to please him. I will see him in Halifax first. But it is my notion, Auguste, that this is the work of a man, and I only wish I could lay my two hands on that man."

Auguste looked as if he expected lightning to strike his employer dead for that impious wish.

"Light a fire, Auguste, and I will burn this bit of witchcraft, to break the charm. But I will first examine our caches, to see if my unknown enemy has disturbed them."

When they left the basin the morning before, they had buried their belongings in three separate places.

Two of the caches contained provisions, and the other held their tools and personal effects.

One of these caches had been discovered and opened, and its contents, as an investigation showed, had been destroyed and thrown into the water.

The others had escaped the search of the depredator.

Near the water Ridsen found several prints of a moccasined foot, which did not fit the feet of Auguste.

This made it clear to his mind that the camp had been visited by an enemy who was probably an Indian; but the purpose of his visit and of his depredations was a mere matter of conjecture.

"I won't let this worry me," said he, "It

just sets me in the idea I had of building a house, so that we can be comfortable while we stay here. Lucky that the thieving scamp did not find our axes and other tools."

"What do fur grub?" inquired Auguste.

"I am lucky there, too, as I had a supply sent to Hubbard's, which must be waiting for me by this time."

CHAPTER XVII.

CHASED BY FIRE.

TIME at The Outlook passed very pleasantly for all concerned, except, perhaps, for Solon Marley and for Louis.

As for the old gentleman, his was a settled melancholy, and he was not likely to be happy in any event but one, and that was an unexpected and highly improbable event.

But he surely seemed to be much better satisfied with his lot in life than he had been before the arrival of the strangers.

This was partly because he felt stronger and better in the companionship of Hemlock Hank, and partly because he was always pleased with what gave his daughter pleasure.

Probably he was not thinking at the time of any results that might or might not follow her association with the young gentleman from Bangor.

It was enough for him to know that a new joy had come into her life.

As for Louis, he had taken to absenting himself from The Outlook, making long journeys in various directions when he was not needed by Mr. Marley.

He had very little to say about those absences; but it was understood that he was spying about in search of the man of whose presence and purpose in that region Hank Ward had brought warning.

Charley Creed did not give his undivided attention to the splendid hunting that Katahdin afforded.

It was quite easy to get game enough for the dwellers on the plateau, and a sufficient quantity had been laid away against the isolation and confinement of a possibly hard winter.

The sport to which the young gentleman from Bangor gave himself up enthusiastically was that of fishing.

His infatuation for this pursuit was naturally explained by the fact that in the many mountain streams trout were numerous and of remarkably fine size and quality.

Such game fellows were they, too, that it was more than a pleasure to catch them.

But his fondness for fishing might also have been explained by the fact that in that occupation he had Mattie Marley for a frequent companion.

In that employment she could easily take part, and she was quite an expert angler, too.

Their fishing excursions were highly enjoyable to themselves, and were not objected to by any person, especially as they kept The Outlook well supplied with delicious trout.

One sunny day that was almost warm, wishing to try their luck before the streams were entirely closed by ice, they took their tackle and lunch, and sallied forth to enjoy what would probably be their final fishing excursion that season.

Louis was away on one of his spying tramps, and Hank Ward remained at The Outlook as a companion for Solon Marley, and to attend generally to matters there.

The young people passed around the side of the peak, and thence over a rocky divide to a heavily-timbered slope on the south side of another section of the mountain, where was a trout stream with which they were well acquainted, as it had already yielded them numerous messes of speckled beauties.

Noon found them in a glen where the mountain-stream formed a dark and quiet pool.

They had caught but a few fish so far, as they had but recently reached the pool, and their luck had not been very brilliant at the start.

Lunch then engaged their attention, as their tramp and the cool mountain air had made them hungry, and they did such good justice to the food they had brought, that the fragments were scarcely worth the consideration of a starved dog.

Satisfied with his meal, and quite contented with his position there, Charley Creed lighted his pipe, and the two dropped into conversation.

He insisted upon speaking to her of her father and his troubles, though that was a sore subject with Mattie.

What he wanted to know was the beginning and culmination of the Bangor difficulty, so that he might hit upon some means of bringing Solon Marley out clear and restoring him to his home.

The points that he wished to get he could not learn from her father, who resolutely refused to speak on the subject, and relapsed into melancholy when it was mentioned in his presence.

Charley found the daughter almost equally disinclined to discuss the subject.

"What is the use, Mr. Creed?" she said. "We had better drop it and attend to our fishing."

"I think you had better call me Charley. Sometimes you do, and sometimes you are so distressingly formal. I wish you would always call me Charley."

"I will gladly do so, if you will drop that subject. It is only when you begin speaking of father's troubles that I remember that you are the son of Mr. Creed of Bangor."

"You ought to be in Bangor, Mattie. That is what I want. You have no business to be buried here in the wilds. I want to get you away from this."

"But that is impossible. You are talking of what cannot be."

"But I think it might be. You ought to have a nice house there, and plenty of friends, and a piano, and go to church and the theaters, and—"

"There! there!" she exclaimed, with a hysterical laugh. "That is enough, and more than enough. I must not think of such things. Come, Charley, if we don't get some fish to carry home, they will say that we are lazy."

"For my part, I admit that I am lazy."

"Oh, Charley! look at my line! What has taken my hook?"

As she spoke she jumped up and seized her fishing-pole, just in time to prevent it from following the line into the water.

The force at the end of the line was clearly too much for her, and Charley hastened to her assistance.

He soon discovered that a monster had been hooked, and that he would have as much as he could do to manage him.

After running out the line as far as it would go, he used all the arts in his power to play the game and tire him out.

"I do wish we could get him!" cried Mattie. "I know that fish. Louis has often spoken of an old monster of a mossback trout that lives in this pool and can never be induced to take a hook. Oh! I hope we can get him!"

"It rather looks as if he has got us," replied Charley, who was meditating a descent into the pool.

Just then the old mossback had retired under a rock at the deepest part of the pool, as if to digest the hook at his leisure, and could not be dislodged.

Suddenly he darted out and down the stream, making the line whizz as he went, and stretching it so taut that he nearly pulled Charley into the water.

Then he leaped straight up, showing his big body clear of the stream, and forming an arch as he flashed back into his native element.

The line lay loose in the water, and he was off.

"We have lost him!" sadly exclaimed Mattie.

As the young man gathered in the line, a blazing piece of wood dropped hissing into the pool.

He looked up quickly, and perceived that it came from the rock above them, which was covered with flame.

Over the cliff at the other side a similar fire was advancing.

So deeply absorbed had they both been in his efforts to secure the big trout, that they had not noticed the red enemy stealing forward on each side of them.

Where or how it had started there was no telling.

Perhaps the fire of some careless campers, or the ashes of some explorer's pipe, had been its beginning, and in the dry interval between the death of the leaves and the first heavy fall of snow it had a fine chance to grow and spread.

It had grown and spread until fire was the monarch of the mountain when the young people discovered it.

Simultaneously with their discovery a strong wind had sprung up, or had just reached the glen, and very soon the roaring of the flames as they licked up the pine needles and leaped from tree to tree was heard above all other sounds.

"The forest is on fire!" shouted the young man. "We must hurry out of this, Mattie."

He picked up the tackle and the few fish they had caught, and led the way out of the glen.

When they reached the timbered slope beyond, the scene was magnificent and appalling.

The fire had already overpassed the crest upon which they had discovered it, and was licking up the leaves and brush in the forest that covered the slope.

At the same time the wind seemed to be increasing, and was driving forward the flames with frightful rapidity.

They ran up the sapless trees as they reached them, catching at the dry leaves and withered limbs, until one after another became a pillar of fire, while streams of fire ran ahead upon the ground as if they had poured down from a volcano.

Already the flames were encroaching and closing in on the only spot left open for the escape of the young people.

That was along the bed of the stream, in which direction they ran at the top of their speed, urged to their best exertions by the roaring of the wind and blaze behind them.

Almost breathless they reached the plateau

at the foot of the slope, which they had supposed would prove a place of safety, only to find that the fire had made a flank movement and threatened to bar their further progress.

Here the brook which they were following spread out into an oblong pond or mountain tarn, the other side of which had not yet been touched by the flames.

Charley knew that the pond was shallow, and perceived that it offered the only chance of escape.

"You must let me carry you, Mattie," said he.

"Oh, Charley! You can't do it. I am too heavy."

"I am no baby, and I mean to do it. Here goes!"

He dropped the fish and the tackle, lifted her up and waded into and across the pond, while she clasped her hands about his shoulders as if she belonged there.

The little lake was scarcely more than knee-deep, and he accomplished his task with apparent ease, but was quite out of breath when he reached the other side.

"Oh, Charley!" she cried, as he set her down. "It has nearly killed you."

"No, no—not a bit of it. Now I defy Hank Ward to say that I can't carry a barrel of sugar."

"For shame, Charley! That is a wretched comparison. I am sure that I am not as heavy as a barrel of sugar."

"But you are ever so much sweeter, and you are liable to melt if you don't hurry home. There's no telling what turn this infernal conflagration will take next."

They soon reached the ridge that led to the peak upon which The Outlook was situated, and crossed it with the fire roaring behind them, but at a comparatively safe distance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"SCOTLAND'S BURNING!"

WHILE his young friend was enjoying his fishing excursion, Hemlock Hank was devoting himself to the manufacture of a pair of snow-shoes.

He was seated in front of the cabin on the plateau in the sunshine, weaving and knotting thongs of buckskin from side to side of the light but strong frame, when he was joined by Solon Marley, who had been comforting himself with an after-dinner nap.

The old gentleman looked curiously at Hemlock Hank and his work.

"Isn't it a snow-shoe that you are making, Hank?" he asked.

"That's what it looks like, and that's what it is."

"I don't see what use you are likely to have for snow-shoes. Winter will be coming on, to be sure; but—"

"Jest so, Mr. Marley. Winter 'll be comin' on, and there'll be plenty of use for 'em afore spring, I guess."

"Before spring. What do you mean by that? Do you expect to stay in the woods all winter?"

"It's likely."

"What will become of your young friend, then? Surely you will not let him go home alone."

"Not much. He will stay jest where I stay."

"And where will that be?"

"Right here, if you don't drive us away. We won't eat you out of house and home, as we will have a load of stuff comin' up afore long. You see, Mr. Marley, it's Charley's idea that he wants to spend a winter up here, and I am more than willing to stay with him."

"It is strange that he should be willing to bury himself in these wilds, even for a winter."

"Strange things will happen, and I don't blame him. If I was a young chap—but that's neither here nor there. If you should drive us away we would make a camp somewhere near here; so you may as well let us stay jest where we are."

Solon Marley reflected upon this for a while. He might have suspected that something of the kind would happen, but Hank's statement came upon him with the force of a revelation.

"Of course you will stay if you wish to," he said at last. "It would be a lie, Hank Ward, if I should say that I am not glad to hear that you expect to stay, as I like and trust you beyond all men. As for your young friend—but I feel sure that he does not mean me any harm."

"Harm? He? If I had as many dollars as I know that he don't mean you any harm, I could buy out Bangor. He means as well by you as I do, if not more so, and, for my part, I want to see you safe from all your enemies, includin' Dick Riden, the Boston detective that I told you about."

"I must admit, Hank, that I am afraid of that man. But Louis is as true as steel, and he has lately taken to looking for Ralston's emissary. If he finds him, he will keep track of his movements, so that I can escape with Mattie if it should be necessary."

"Well, Mr. Marley, I guess there won't be any call for running away, as long as I and

Charley are here to help you. I only hope that Louis won't get into a fight with the cuss, if he does come across him."

"No danger of that, I think. I told him that there must be no killing or attempting to kill, and he will obey me. It seems to me, Hank, that there is a strong smell of smoke in the air."

"Just what I was thinking; must be fire about somewhere. I hope our folks—Hello! here comes Louis."

The Indian came around the side of the peak, and approached them rapidly.

He seemed to be unusually excited, and his eyes gleamed as if he had found or achieved something.

"How now, Louis? What's up?" demanded Hemlock Hank.

"Louis found 'um," he replied, in a tone of intense satisfaction.

"Found what?" inquired Solon Marley.

"Bad white man and Auguste."

"The thunder!" exclaimed Hank. "He has found Dick Riden and his Injun. Did you hurt 'em, Louis?"

"Not hurt 'um much. Mebbe scare 'um some."

"Did you see either of 'em?"

"No."

"What did you find, then? What did you do?"

"Louis found 'um camp—over in big basin. Tent like Hank's, and cache dere. Cut 'um tent up, an' spile 'um t'ings."

"Is that all?"

"Put up arrer an' totem, to make go."

"So you gave them notice to quit, in the Injun fashion. I hope you didn't leave a trail that they could follow."

The Indian smiled grimly.

"Leave 'um trail like snake on rock. Not foller Louis much."

"Well, that'll be apt to worry 'em some. What does this smoke in the air mean, Louis?"

"Big fire comin'—fire in woods."

"Which way?"

The Indian pointed beyond the peak.

Both the white men jumped up in alarm.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Hemlock Hank. "Mattie has gone that way fishin' with Charley Creed. You know the place, Louis—the pool where the big mossback lives. Do you suppose the woods are on fire about there, Louis?"

The Indian's usually stolid expression gave way to a look of terror.

"Heap fire dere," he answered. "Plenty fire 'fore now."

Solon Marley's face was filled with intense anguish.

"Merciful heaven!" he exclaimed, as he tottered away.

"What are you going to do, old man?" demanded Hank.

"To seek my child. If she should be lost, there is nothing left."

"Hold on! No use in startin' off that way. There's nothin' you can do, and I don't think you need to worry. Charley Creed is with her, and he's no sort of a fool, though he is fond of runnin' his head ag'inst stun walls. He knows enough to come in when it rains."

"How can you speak so coolly when my child is in peril?"

"We've got to be cool. Nothin' to be gained by flyin' off the handle. Louis and I will go and look for the young folks, and you may foller if you want to."

The Indian had already started off at a lope and Hemlock Hank ran in the same direction, with Solon Marley at his heels.

When they had rounded the point of the peak they were compelled to stop a moment and gaze at the scene that opened before them.

Mountain and forest beyond were a mass of shooting flames, and the sky was dark with the canopy of smoke that arose from the great conflagration.

A brisk breeze was blowing toward them, loaded with heated air and with the stinging, pungent odor of burning wood.

"It's comin' on like wild-fire!" shouted the guide. "Stay right here, old man, and pray that we may find 'em safe!"

Solon Marley sunk upon his knees, and Hemlock Hank pressed forward.

Louis was already running and leaping down the peak, heedless of rocks and trees, toward the ridge that separated it from the rest of the mountain.

Presently his glad cry was borne upward by the wind.

"All right!" yelled Hank, taking up the shout and sending it on.

Solon Marley arose, and eagerly gazed in the direction of the shouts until he saw his faithful friends returning with his daughter and Charley Creed.

As they came, it could easily be seen that the fire was swiftly pursuing them.

In a few moments they were all gathered on the plateau in front of the cabin.

"Yes, we had a pretty rough time," said the young man in answer to the questions that were showered upon him. "I will tell you all about it when I can. But there is no time for talk. The fire is coming like a freshet, and it is sure to sweep over this place."

"I guess we won't let that worry us, Charley," coolly replied Hank.

"Won't let it worry you? You've got to let it worry you. Do you know what that fire is? There is no stopping it or standing before it. We must fly immediately, and try to find a place of safety."

"Guess we'll stay right here, Charley. It's as safe here as anywhere."

"How can it be safe?"

"Don't you know that hole in the rock, back of the cabin? We can crawl in there if we have to, and let the darned old fire go by. It's Mr. Marley's cellar, you know."

"I had forgotten that."

"Jest so. What we've got to do now is to look arter our things, so's they won't git burned up if the house should happen to go, and we'd better hurry about it, too."

The hole in the rock against which the cabin was built had a door that opened into it, and was generally used, as Hank had said, as a cellar.

It was not large enough to hold all the belongings of the entire party, but could be relied on as a safe retreat from fire.

All set at work under the direction of Hemlock Hank, and worked with a will.

The most valuable and necessary portion of the joint "plunder" was stowed away in the hole in the rock, and everything else was carried out and piled in the middle of the cleared space on the plateau.

This labor was not finished when the fire came around the side of the peak—not creeping, but rushing around, as if it meant business and wanted to carry everything before it at once.

In a little while the timber at that end of the plateau had caught, and soon that at the other end was on fire.

Mattie was sent into the cave, which the others reserved as a refuge in case of need.

In the mean time, they devoted their attention to endeavors to save the cabin and the property exposed on the plateau.

Fortunately the side of the peak above them was nearly bare of timber, there being nothing but a scanty and stunted growth for the fire to take hold of.

Flying embers and the burning trees on the plateau were what they had to fear.

From a distance it must have looked as if the entire mountain-side was wrapped in flame; but in fact there was an open space on the plateau between two fires, which could be watched and guarded.

In a spring that flowed plentifully from the side of the peak the workers dipped blankets, with which they covered the pile of property that was so valuable to them.

With buckets of water from the spring they drenched the roof of the cabin, and at the same time guarded it from burning sticks and flying embers.

The heat and smoke were so oppressive that they could not long endure the out door air, and they relieved each other at the labor, taking turns in retiring into the hole in the rock.

Gradually the fire burned out; but it was not until morning dawned that they were able to rest in the consciousness of safety for themselves, the cabin and their property.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROW AT HUBBARD'S.

THERE was a jolly but by no means harmonious crowd collected at Hubbard's tavern on the Wassataquoit.

Hubbard's was a rude but substantial and comfortable log-house, with such outbuildings as were necessary, situated where the road that was followed by the supply-teams crossed the river, and not far from the Penobscot.

Entertainment for man and beast was to be had there, such as it was, and Hubbard's was a noted rendezvous for loggers, as well as for drogers, as the teamsters were styled who brought supplies from below.

The most popular of the luxuries afforded by the tavern was a stock of liquors, which never failed to find favor in the eyes of the woodsmen.

Zeb Carter was there, with Sol Barnes and Luke Schooley and another of his party, to receive and take charge of a load of supplies that had just been brought up for them.

Hemlock Hank was also there, on an errand of his own, concerning which he had no communications to make.

The day was wintry, and the warmth of the big fire was agreeable, and so was the warmth of Hubbard's rum and whisky, of which all drank freely but Hank Ward, who never touched otherwise than lightly the cup that inebriates.

The more Sol Barnes drank, the deeper became his state of melancholy; but his camp comrades showed the effect of their potations.

Four drogers were also present, who had just arrived from below with the load for Carter's party.

They were tall and hardy men, who had evidently been drinking on the road, as they were

somewhat exhilarated when they reached the tavern.

Of course their arrival caused further demands to be made upon Hubbard's stock of liquors, and the party became noisy as well as jolly.

They swapped news and gossip, and chaffed and quarreled with each other, until Zeb Carter, who had not got rid of his supply of hard sense, announced his intention of loading up and returning to camp.

This was the sticking-point.

There was a keg of rum among the supplies brought for Carter, and he was strongly inclined to suspect the drogers of having tapped it.

As they had dipped into it on the way more or less extensively, they were naturally desirous that their depredations should not be discovered—at least not until they were well out of the vicinity.

"All right, old man," said Ed Binn, the leader of the drogers. "Just sign my receipt and we will help you load up."

Zeb Carter looked over the receipt, and hesitated about signing it.

"This makes me say," he remarked, "that the stuff has all arrived, and in good order. I must know that before I sign it."

"They are all out there, and you have seen 'em," insisted Binn.

"I have only seen a load of goods, and I don't know whether they are all right or not."

"Of course they are all right. Didn't I receipt for 'em and bring 'em and watch 'em all the way? Don't be pinch fingered and mean tempered, Zeb Carter."

But Zeb had just enough liquor aboard to make him stubborn, and he insisted upon examining the goods, declaring that he would sign no receipt until he had gone through the lot.

So they all adjourned outside, with the exception of Hemlock Hank and Josh Hubbard, the tavern-keeper.

Luke Schooley brought up his ox team, and the goods that belonged to the loggers' party were loaded by themselves, the drogers standing by and scowling while Zeb Carter inspected every article.

All went well, however, until Zeb came to the cask of rum, and he frowned as he lifted it.

Then he shook it, and the liquor "sloshed" about in a manner that convinced him that the keg was far from full.

"The rum's short," he remarked. "As much as three gallons gone out o' this keg, I should say."

Ed Binn flared up at once, in the style of a man who knows that he has been caught, but means to brazen his way out.

"If that is so, we didn't gone it. The keg is just as we received it."

"That can't be a fact," insisted Carter. "Seth Sloman never was known to send up a keg o' rum that was part empty. He ain't the man to do that sort o' thing. You fellers have been drinkin' our rum on the road."

"That's a lie!" exclaimed the droger.

Zeb's face turned red, but he was naturally slow to anger.

"I believe it to be a fact," he answered, "and I will measure the rum and will charge you with what's gone."

"I tell you it's a lie!" shouted Binn. "A mean, sneakin' underhanded lie!"

This was too much for Zeb Carter's patience.

He drew back his right fist and let it fly into the face of the man who had insulted him.

Binn was quick to retaliate, and the drogers rushed to support their leader, while the loggers hastened to the assistance of Zeb Carter.

That is to say, the loggers rallied to help their comrade, with the exception of Solomon Barnes.

He not only failed to come forward, but retired to a little distance from the scene, where he sadly surveyed the skirmish as if he had not the least personal interest in it.

This defection put the odds decidedly against the loggers, especially as Luke Schooley had not been built for a fighter.

He meant well enough, and managed to get in the way of as many blows as anybody; but his short arms and legs, as well as his shortness of body and breath, prevented him from taking an active part in such an athletic contest.

None of the combatants had recourse to any lethal weapon.

Probably they did not think of such a thing, preferring to trust to the arms with which nature had furnished them, and to whip or be whipped in a fair fight.

But the loggers soon began to get the worst of the battle, and would doubtless have been compelled to submit to a severe drubbing, if it had not been for the timely interference of Hemlock Hank, who ran out of the house with Josh Hubbard.

It was natural, if he was going to take part in the fray, that he should side with his own acquaintances and previous comrades, and he promptly did so.

He seized Ed Binn by the collar, and gave him a fling that sent him whirling away from the fight.

Another droger received from him a right-

handed blow that "keeled" him over upon the ground, decreasing his immediate interest in the difficulty.

The tavern-keeper also rushed into the thick of the melee, commanding and imploring the men to quit fighting.

"Hank Ward!" he shouted, "why don't you help me to keep the peace here?"

"Keep the peace?" replied Hank. "Ain't I tryin' to keep the peace? Do jest as I do, Josh, and knock down every man who lifts a finger to fight, and we'll soon have peace."

As he spoke he tripped up another droger, and sent him sprawling upon the ground.

His style of peace-making proved effective, and a sudden stop was put to the fight.

The loggers, who had already had enough of it, were quite ready to quit, and the drogers, perceiving what a formidable ally their antagonists had gained, were not disposed to continue hostilities.

The affair of the keg of rum was satisfactorily settled, and Luke Schooley's load was completed.

When this task was finished, the loggers turned their attention to Sol Barnes.

They still had a good supply of anger on hand, and he was a good subject to discharge it upon.

His offense was that when his camp comrades had become involved in a fight, he had backed out, and had not offered to lift a finger to help them.

This was a crime in their eyes, and their recent enemies were equally loud in their condemnation of the sneak.

When he was asked what excuse he could offer for his pusillanimous behavior, he presented what was considered a very lame one.

"I'm a member of the church—Presbyterian," said he, "and it's ag'in' my prenciples to engage in a fight."

"I don't believe a word of it," replied Zeb Carter. "If it's ag'in' your principles to help your friends when they are in trouble, you ought never to have come up here and gone in to camp with 'em."

"I didn't git them into trouble, and I never pertended to be a fighter."

"Let's kick the darned sneak out o' camp," said Luke Schooley. "It's hard to find anythin' to kick; but I will chance him once."

Luke suited the action to the word, advancing upon Sol Barnes with intent to kick.

He did kick.

But his attempt was not successful.

As he had said, there was not much to kick at, and he was too short-legged for that line of work.

As he raised his foot, Sol caught it and raised it a little higher, lifting the teamster off his balance so that he fell backward on the ground.

This unexpected exploit raised a roar; but anger prevailed over amusement, and the loggers rushed forward to finish the job at which Luke had failed.

Sol Barnes did not await any further attack.

Though he did not boast of prowess as a fighter, he was aware of his superiority in the matter of legs, and believed in his ability to get over ground at a rapid rate.

He ran away at the top of his speed, and soon disappeared in the forest, followed by the jeers of his incensed companions.

"Let him slide!" ordered Zeb Carter. "That is as good a way as any to git rid of him. We will go on to camp without him, and when he comes there ag'in we will take a vote to decide whether he shall stay."

Before he went off with his comrades, Zeb had a word to say to Hemlock Hank.

"It was real good of you, Hank, to come to our help," said he.

"I was only keepin' the peace," replied Hank.

"Jest so. I understand that. But we are much obliged to you, all the same, and if we can ever do you a good turn, we'll be glad of the chance. By the way, Hank, you remember my tellin' you about Dick Ridsen, comin' up the river?"

"Yes," answered Hank, suddenly becoming interested.

"He is somewhere about here. He struck our camp a while ago, and was askin' about you. Wanted to know where you were, and said he would like to see you. I had my doubts about what a man of that sort might be wantin' of you, and kept a still tongue in my head. That sneakin' Sol Barnes spoke up and tried to tell somethin'; but luckily he didn't know but little."

"So Dick Ridsen wants to see me," observed Hank. "Well, I would like to see him, too."

CHAPTER XX.

DICK RISDEN'S BIG CAPTURE.

HEMLOCK HANK soon had his wish. Zeb Carter and his party were hardly out of sight when Dick Ridsen arrived at Hubbard's, accompanied by his Indian, Auguste.

With them came the recreant Sol Barnes, who seemed to have already put himself on familiar terms with the detective.

Under a shed were stored a number of bar-

rels, boxes, bales and bundles, which Hank was examining when those three arrived.

"There's Hemlock Hank," whispered Barnes to the detective—"that tall man at the shed."

Risden at once stepped up to the tall man, and accosted him in a friendly manner.

"I believe this is Hank Ward, commonly and well known as Hemlock Hank."

"Ward is my name," slowly answered the other, "and folks do sometimes call me Hemlock Hank."

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Ward. I have heard so much of you that I have wanted to see you. My name is Risden—generally called Dick Risden."

"Proud to know you, Mr. Risden. Strangers is sca'ce in these parts at this time o' year, and we are allus glad to meet one and pick up a bit o' news."

The two men were silent for a brief space as they inspected each other—each sizing the other up, but endeavoring to appear as if he were not doing anything of the kind.

Risden made an advance in a convivial way.

"I was just going in to get something to drink. Will you join me, Mr. Ward?"

"Thanky; but I guess I've got as much as I care to take on."

"It is well for good men to be careful, especially if they have far to go. Are you stopping near this place?"

"Sometimes near, an' sometimes not so near. I've got a young gentleman of Bangor in my charge, and we kinder float around, you see, huntin' an' fishin' and the like."

"I suppose you are looking for your goods here."

"Hey?"

"The stuff that is marked W in a square is yours, I believe."

"Well, yes—mine and his'n."

"That looks as if you mean to stay up here through the winter. Are you thinking of doing so?"

Evidently the stranger was trying to extract information, and Hemlock Hank was on his guard.

"Charley and I ain't doin' much thinkin'," he answered—"jest goin' about and enjoyin' ourselves. When he gives the word to go, we'll light out. What might you be doin' in these parts, Mr. Risden?"

"I am exploring, and have business that may keep me here for some time. When are you going to take your stuff away, Mr. Ward?"

"Can't say. Mebbe not at all. They are safe here, and we can draw on 'em when we want 'em."

"I see some goods there marked L in a diamond. Do you know whose they are?"

"It's about as much as I can do to attend to my own business," significantly replied the tall lumberman.

But the hint was wasted on Dick Risden, who quickly returned to the charge.

"Do you know a man named Solon Marley, Mr. Ward?"

So that was what the questioning was to lead up to.

But the man who tried to bore into as tough a knurl as Hemlock Hank might spoil an auger.

"Marley?" he answered, with an abstracted air. "Seems like I know the name."

"No doubt you do. Solon Marley, of Bangor, formerly book-keeper for Creed & Ralston."

"The man who got into trouble there about some notes or sech?"

"That's the man."

"Yaas, I've heerd of him. Used to kinder know him—not much, as he wasn't in my line. 'Pears to me that he ran away. Do you know what's become of him?"

"I have understood that he is somewhere in these parts."

Hemlock Hank's weather-beaten face betrayed nothing but innocent astonishment.

"Sho! You don't say! What would a city man like him be doin' up here in the wild woods?"

"Hiding, perhaps."

"Mebbe so; but I pity him, if he is. There's plenty o' room to hide in these woods; but it's a mighty poor place to live in, except for sech men as Josh Hubbard here, and I guess he don't have the very best kind of a time."

"You don't know where he is, then?" queried the detective.

"If there is sech a man about here, Mr. Risden, it would be like huntin' a needle in a haystack to try to find him, and I wouldn't like to take the job."

"Couldn't I hire you?"

"Guess not. I'm already hired. I will ax you to excuse me now, as I must be gittin' along. But I must say, Mr. Dick Risden, that you're ahead of our Maine folks by a long chalk."

"How so?"

"We've got men here who can ask more questions in a minute than I can answer in a day, and some o' 'em have got the name of bein' mighty inquisitive on short acquaintance; but you beat 'em all holler. Good-day."

"Nothing simple about him," muttered Dick Risden, as he gazed after the retiring form of the tall lumberman.

He walked into the tavern, where he invited his followers to join him in a social glass, and then invited them outside.

"Do you mean to foller him, and see where he goes to?" inquired Sol Barnes.

"No, indeed. He is too sharp for that, and I think I am too sharp to be fooled by him. He came up the supply road, and is likely to go back by it part of the way. Then he may be depended on to branch off and take all sorts of turns and twists to hide his trail. But I know how to head him off, and I mean to do it. Are you sure that you want to go with me, Barnes?"

"Sart'in sure, if the pay is sure."

"There is nothing the matter with the pay. Come on, then, and we must step lively. I have not done with that man yet. I will let him know that Dick Risden is not the sort to be trifled with."

In the mean time the man against whom these threats were made was quietly pursuing his way, ignorant of them, but not unmindful of the man who uttered them.

He was in no sort of a hurry, but sauntered slowly down the so-called supply road, meditating as he went.

"Darn the sly skunk!" he muttered. "I ought to have clapped a stopper on his questions sooner than I did. The idea of his tryin' to squeeze anythin' out o' me about poor Solon Marley! It's just too ridiculous."

He went on a little further, and stopped and meditated again.

"Guess I may as well sheer off arter a bit," said he. "That is jest the kind of a man who might take a notion to trail me up and see where I fetch to. He wouldn't have pumped me as he did unless he had reason to believe that I knew somethin', and it would be his game to try to find his man by follerin' me. But I can beat him at that since I've got my eyes open, and he might as well try to foller a snake."

But the confidence of Hemlock Hank was not justified by the event.

He had not been pursued, but had been overhauled.

His enemies had not followed his trail, but had crossed his track.

He had reached a frozen stream that crossed the road, and was about to step out on the glare ice, when a man sprung upon him from the cover of a rock.

His foe had approached him from behind, unseen and stealthily, and Hank had no suspicion of his presence there until two strong arms were twined about him.

With an effort that could not be repressed, he rose to his feet, and grappled with his antagonist.

Immediately two other men threw themselves upon him, before he could shake off the grip of the first, and by their united strength he was overcome.

He was soon subdued, and they put the seal upon their capture by securely binding his hands behind his back.

Breathless and indignant, he seated himself upon a rock to cool off.

He had already recognized Dick Risden and his two companions, and now he gazed at them coolly and contemptuously.

"So it is you," he said. "A nice sort of a trick this is to play on a man who never did you any harm, and who was quietly attendin' to his own business."

"It worked, though," remarked the detective.

"You think so, do you? Mebbe you don't know. You ain't through with it yet, I guess. It's what decent folks would call an outrage. What does it mean?"

"It means, Hank Ward, that I have stopped you here in the name of the law and in the interest of justice."

"I don't seem to see it in that light. Mebbe you'll be good enough to go on an' tell me what the law has got ag'in' me, and what sort of a holt justice has got on me."

"I will tell you plainly what I mean. It is absolutely necessary that I should find Solon Marley, the man I asked you about awhile ago. I am an officer of the law, and my business here is to arrest him and bring him to justice. I have been informed that you know where he is to be found, and I want you to tell me and guide me to him."

"That's all, hey? Glad to know that you don't want anythin' more. Who gave you that there information?"

"I don't choose to say. It is enough that I believe it."

Hemlock Hank actually "snickered."

He seemed to have got hold of a comical phase of the situation.

"So you believe," said he, "that I know what you want to know, and you expect me to tell you. If I do tell you, will you let me loose?"

"Yes."

"And you will believe whatever I see fit to tell you?"

"I will," firmly replied the detective. "Because, Hank Ward, I am sure that it will be the truth."

Hank dropped his eyes.

The comical phase of the situation had escaped him.

"You've kinder got me there," he sadly remarked, "and I must say, Mr. Risden, that it ain't a bad sort of a character you give me. I hope I deserve it. I didn't larn to lie when I was a youngster, and I'm afeard it's too late in life to begin now."

"I think you may be relied upon never to begin. Are you ready now to tell me where Solon Marley is to be found?"

"You want the truth?" queried Hank.

"Of course I do."

"Or nothin'?"

"Just the truth."

"It has to be the truth or nothin', and so it's nothin'."

"Then you mean to say that you won't tell me?"

"Jest that. I've got nothin' to tell you."

Dick Risden frowned, and a hard, set look came into his face.

"You will be obliged to tell," said he. "Do you not believe that I can force you to do so?"

Hemlock Hank rose to his full height, and looked his interrogator squarely in the face.

"Mr. Dick Risden," said he, "did you ever git blood out of a turnip?"

"Perhaps not; but it can be done."

"As how?"

"If I eat the turnip it will make blood in my body."

Hank laughed again.

"Darred if you ain't cute!" he said. "But I ain't as soft as a turnip, and I guess you won't be likely to eat me."

"No; but I will get what I want. I have never yet failed in anything I undertook to do."

"Guess you'll have to begin, unless you drop this contract. You may as well understand that I've got nothin' to tell you about Solon Marley. First and last, that's all I have to say. You couldn't coax or cheat me into sayin' anythin' more. You could never hire me to say it. As for scarin'—I guess I don't scare very easy."

CHAPTER XXI.

SNOWED IN.

THE detective bit his lip as he looked at the stubborn man before him, and for the first time he seemed to be puzzled.

He doubtless realized the fact that he had undertaken a job of exceeding toughness.

"Tough and true is what they call you, as I have heard," said he, "and no doubt you deserve the name. I like to see a man stick to his friends, though there are times when he may carry the thing too far, and this is one of them. There is one point, at least, on which you have satisfied me, and that is that you do know the hiding-place of Solon Marley."

"Have it your own way," remarked Hank.

"No use for me to argufy the pint."

"You know, and you will have to tell. You must go with me now, Hank Ward, and, when I get you where I want you, you will not go loose until you give up your secret."

"If you say I must go, I suppose I must. You've got me in a hamper now; but it'll be queer if I stay that way."

"But you will."

"So you say. I guess you know, Mr. Dick Risden, that this sort o' thing is ag'in' law."

"There are times," replied the detective, "when I am compelled to make a law to suit the case I am at work on. I am responsible for what I do."

"The winters are long up here. Have you figgered up the cost of my board an' lodgin'?"

"I am not talking nonsense. Come on. We have a long tramp before us."

It was indeed a long tramp—a tedious, worrisome, wearisome tramp—through the vast forest, across icy streams, over difficult ridges, and down yet more difficult ravines—pushing through tangled undergrowth, climbing over fallen trees, and stumbling among loose and jagged rocks.

To all of them it was difficult, but especially so to Hemlock Hank, who was not allowed the use of his hands, and had only his legs to rely upon.

But he kept up his spirits remarkably well, and was by all odds the most cheerful one of the party, though that was not much to say, as the others seemed to be under a cloud of sadness and perplexity.

Dick Risden offered to unbind his arms if he would give his word to make no attempt to escape.

But the offer was of no use to Hemlock Hank.

"I couldn't give a promise that I'd be sure not to keep," said he. "You can jest rely on one thing, Mr. Dick Risden, and that is that I mean to slide out the first chance I git. There you have it, honest and solid. If you want to keep me, you'll have to kill me an' salt me down."

The sky had been heavily overcast at the time of Hemlock Hank's capture, and shortly after that event snow began to fall.

It continued to come down as they tramped around the base of the mountain, and increased

in rapidity and volume, until it seriously impeded their progress.

At first the snow fell gently and in large flakes, though very thickly; but after a while it came in smaller and harder particles, accompanied by a stiff breeze that blew it into their faces, quite to their discomfort.

When they reached the pass the snow was a few inches in depth, and promised to be much deeper before daylight.

A strong wind was blowing directly down the pass as they went up into the basin, and that, coupled with the growing darkness, made the concluding part of their journey very toilsome.

When they reached the cabin which Dick Ridsen and Auguste had built against a cliff, they were all pretty thoroughly exhausted and glad to reach a place of rest.

Hemlock Hank was not surprised at finding the cabin there.

It confirmed Louis's story of finding and destroying a camp in the basin, and convinced him that the detective meant business, and had come to stay.

When they were safe in the hut, Auguste uncovered the embers on the hearth, and soon had a good fire burning.

It made the place look so cheerful that even sour Solomon Barnes brightened up.

Dick Ridsen secured the door on the inside with a chain and a padlock, and then untied the captive's hands.

"I guess you're safe enough in that," remarked Hank. "I feel kinder tuckered out, myself, and I wouldn't be likely to try to run away on such a night and in such a storm."

"It promises to be a real old-fashioned snow-storm," replied the detective. "I hope that it may let up, and that it will not drift badly."

While supper was being prepared, the captive looked around the cabin, and saw that it was well supplied with barrels and boxes and bales that had been brought up from below.

"Looks like you've come to settle, Mr. Dick Ridsen," he remarked.

"I always do what I undertake to do," replied the detective. "I shall finish the job I am on, if it takes all winter."

From a bale he drew forth some substantial winter clothing, which he exhibited to Sol Barnes.

"I think I will be able to fit you, Barnes," he said. "You are needing winter clothing pretty badly, and it is lucky for you, I guess, that you have found me."

As Sol was examining the garments, Hemlock Hank regarded him with a frown of displeasure.

"Is that sneak goin' to stay with you, Mr. Dick Ridsen?" he asked.

"Do you refer to Sol Barnes?" inquired the detective.

"That's the dientical skunk I'm speakin' of."

"He is in my employ at present. Do you object to him?"

"All I've got to say about it is that you had better not leave him alone with me, or he may come up missin'. I do most mortally hate a sneak."

The supper that was prepared by the joint efforts of Auguste and Ridsen was a good and substantial one.

The four men did it ample justice, and it put them all in a better humor.

After supper Ridsen supplied them all with pipes and tobacco, and they sat around the fire and smoked.

No further allusion was made that night to Hemlock Hank's captivity or its cause; but they conversed freely upon indifferent subjects, as if he were a guest toward whom the proprietor of the cabin had none but the most friendly intentions.

Outside the wind had grown stronger and wilder, and its roaring, together with the flueness of the snow that sifted through the crevices of the logs, forced them to believe that snow obstructions would be very serious the next day.

Naturally the talk ran upon the big snowstorms of the past, concerning which all the party were well supplied with stories and reminiscences, and even Sol Barnes contributed his quota to the stock.

The detective professed to have no fear of snow-storms.

"This would be a bad one to be caught out in," said he; "but men can worry through with the worst of them if they know how. In fact there is scarcely anything that a man can't do nowadays, if he has the will and the skill. Since modern science can extract fire from a snow-bank, and rum from a rail fence, it ought to be able to get blood out of a turnip."

As he said this he looked significantly at Hemlock Hank, but made no visible impression upon that tough specimen.

When they had finished their smoke they were glad enough to turn in on their couches of spruce and fir boughs and under a covering of blankets.

Before lying down, Dick Ridsen unlocked the door, and endeavored to push it open.

It opened outwardly, when it opened at all. On this occasion it did not open at all.

Evidently there was a heavy snow-bank against it.

The stout "punchon" door was well able to resist any possible pressure of snow; but it was solidly fixed in its place, and could not be opened.

There was a thoughtful look on the detective's face as he returned from trying this experiment, which was reflected from the countenances of the others.

The storm was surely a very severe one, and there could be no doubt that the snow was drifting heavily.

But it was so comfortable and cheerful within the cabin, that they might well be excused for an unwillingness to look too far into the future.

In the morning, if they had confessed what they felt, no small amount of anxiety would have been expressed.

It was quite dark in the cabin, no light coming in from any quarter, though it was late enough for the sun to be up.

No more snow was sifting in through the crevices of the logs.

This did not necessarily indicate the cessation of the storm, as the cracks were so choked up with snow that no more could get in.

In fact, they had no means of knowing anything at all about the state of affairs outside.

But it was necessary that they should know.

While Auguste and Sol Barnes were arranging the fire and preparing breakfast, Dick Ridsen and Hemlock Hank made such examinations as their position allowed them to make.

The detective examined the door again, and discovered that it was impossible to open it.

On the side of the cabin that faced the basin was an opening that was closed by a shutter, which he had made of the cover of one of his boxes.

The shutter moved inwardly, and he pulled it open.

Nothing could be seen there but a wall of snow.

He felt of it, and sounded it as well as he could, and perceived that it was packed solidly, as drifted snow is wont to pack.

"We are snowed in," he said, as he closed the shutter.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE STORM AT THE OUTLOOK.

It was at a very early hour in the morning that Hemlock Hank left The Outlook, to go to Hubbard's for the purpose of seeing if any supplies had reached there, either for Solon Marley or for himself and Charley Creed.

He did not require any company on this journey, and Charley was quite willing to remain on the plateau with Solon Marley and his daughter.

Louis had gone hunting, but did not expect to be long away.

As Hank had started so soon in the morning, it was supposed that he would return at a reasonably early hour in the afternoon.

When the middle of the afternoon had passed and he had not arrived, it was decided that he had found friends at Hubbard's, and had lingered to enjoy their society.

It was not until nightfall that anxiety concerning his absence began to be expressed.

Not only had he been expected at a much earlier hour, but it had begun to snow, and the snow was falling heavily.

Nobody feared that he would lose his way in the darkness; but it was thought that, if the storm should prove to be a severe one, he might be prevented from climbing the mountain.

Louis, who had come home from his hunt when the storm set in, shared the anxiety of the others, though his trouble was more evident in his demeanor than in his words.

Charley Creed—doubtless for the reason that he knew less about the matter than anybody—was the only one of the party who kept up his spirits, and he vainly endeavored to inspire his companions with a share of his own cheerfulness.

"Hank is all right," said he. "He will be here to-morrow, safe and sound, if not sooner; but he will not be likely to try to make the trip in the night and the storm. There is nobody living who is better able to take care of himself, and he may be relied on to look out for Hank Ward all the time."

This cheerful view of the matter did not carry conviction to the minds of his hearers.

Hank knew so well how to take care of himself that none of the ordinary chances of the journey to and from Hubbard's would have kept him from reaching The Outlook during the daytime.

Something extraordinary, therefore, had occurred to prevent him from returning.

"Perhaps it is not so very extraordinary," insisted Charley. "It is quite likely that he has met some of his old cronies at the tavern, and they have got to drinking, as loggers will, and time has passed without notice. He has concluded to make a night of it, I suppose; but he will turn up all right when he gets ready to come home."

But this seemed highly improbable to people who were better acquainted with Hank Ward than his young friend was.

He was never considered a drinking man, and, whatever had prevented him from returning, they were sure that liquor was in no way responsible for his absence.

As the darkness was thickening, Louis built a fire near the edge of the plateau, and they went in to supper.

But it was a dull and comfortless meal.

They ate with the door open, in spite of the cold and the snow, as it was possible that a cry of "hello!" might come to their ears from the other end of the pass that led to the mountain spur.

Nothing of the kind was heard, and at last the door was unwillingly closed, shutting them in from the elements.

The wind did not blow fiercely there, as it was northeasterly, and they were well shielded from it by the peak; but the snow fell rapidly, and showed a disposition to bank up wherever it found anything to hold the drifts.

Before retiring, the men frequently went to the edge of the plateau, to strain their eyes by trying to look into the darkness, and to listen for distant shouts.

But they only heard the sighing of the wind in the trees, and they only saw the snow that was filling the air and deepening on the ground.

Before going to bed they piled heavy wood on the fire out there, to keep it burning as long as it would.

Not that they had the faintest hope that Hemlock Hank was or might be anywhere within sight; but there was no telling what chance would occur.

In the morning they found the snow nearly waist deep on the plateau, and a white mound where the signal-fire had been.

The snow was not badly banked up about the house, though it had drifted in places to the height of twenty or thirty feet, or even more.

Before they could make a move in any direction, they were obliged to cut paths, first to wood and water, and then out to the edge of the plateau, and this was a labor that taxed the energies of the three men through the greater part of the day.

Of course they had no expectation of seeing their absent friend, as the snow was so deep that he would not be able to travel without snow-shoes.

To be sure, if he should happen to be still at Hubbard's, he might borrow snow-shoes there; but the snow was as yet too soft to allow him to use them.

To provide against any possible contingency, as well as for future use, they rigged up the block and tackle which was the usual mode of reaching the plateau in winter.

At no great distance from the narrow pass the mountain-side fell away abruptly, forming a sheer precipice some fifty or sixty feet in height, at the foot of which was a slope that could easily be reached from the forest below.

Over the edge of the precipice stretched the gnarled trunk of a stout tree.

To the tree Louis fastened a pulley, through which he rove a rope with a sling at the end that hung over the cliff.

The other end of the rope might be carried to a rude windlass that had been previously erected, and thus it could be used for hauling up a man, or any articles that should be brought to the head of the slope.

If Charley Creed's mind had been free, he would have delighted in the magnificent prospect that was presented to his vision from his position at The Outlook.

Before and below him lay a world of snow, scarcely anything else being visible in the vast field of whiteness that obscured the ordinary features of the landscape.

There were no more lakes, no more rivers, and the only salient points of the view that remained were the shining crests of distant mountains.

But he was too much troubled about the fate of his friend to take a lively interest in the wonderful scene, and his only thought was that he wanted to go in search of Hemlock Hank.

There was no chance then, either that day or the next, for him to make such an excursion or any kind of an excursion.

It was necessary to wait until the snow should become crusted.

On the third day a heavy rain fell, and it was quite a warm rain, melting a large portion of the snow.

It was followed by a cold storm of sleet, and the sleet was followed by a hard freeze.

Then there was nothing to hinder him, and he made his preparations to start at an early hour in the morning.

Solon Marley would have preferred to send Louis, who was more than willing to go; but Charley insisted upon making the journey with a pertinacity that was unusual in him.

He still adhered to the opinion that Hank had been detained at Hubbard's.

It was useless to tell him that if such were the case, his friend would have set out to return

as soon as the snow would bear his weight, and ought already to have reached the plateau.

If he should fail to find the missing man at Hubbard's, he would at least get news of him there, such as might aid in a further search.

He declared that he had not the slightest fear of getting lost, or of any other danger.

He knew the way to Hubbard's well enough, and there was no reason why he should not be able to go there and back, as well as any other person.

His will prevailed over advice and expostulations, and he was soon in trim for the trip.

Solon Marley furnished him with a loud and shrill whistle, with which he was to give information of his return to the head of the slope.

Around his waist he buckled a loaded revolver, and at his back he tied his skates and a pair of snow-shoes.

Thus accoutered, he was lowered from the plateau to the foot of the cliff, and began his journey.

He was not yet an adept in the use of snow-shoes, but soon began to "get the hang" of them, his greatest difficulty at first being, as he partly walked and partly slid down the slope, to keep himself clear of collision with the trees that covered it.

When he reached the lake, he was greatly surprised and rejoiced to find it comparatively clear of snow.

There was plenty on the islands and on shore, whither it had drifted in great heaps, and here and there on the lake were some pretty high ridges.

But the greater part of the ice was clear enough to afford good skating, and he gladly availed himself of the chance.

Replacing his snow-shoes on his back, he strapped on his skates, and was soon whizzing over the lake at a fine rate of speed.

Near the foot of the lake he landed, and again donned his snow-shoes.

He easily found a trail that led into the supply-road, and followed that road to Hubbard's, reaching the tavern in good time.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CHASED BY WOLVES.

AT Hubbard's Charley Creed hastened to make inquiries concerning Hemlock Hank.

He got news there; but it was of a most unsatisfactory description.

Hank Ward had been at the tavern on the day he started from The Outlook, but had left for home in good time and good order.

Josh Hubbard told the young man of the collision between the loggers and the drogers, in which Hank had taken part; but the little difficulty had been pleasantly settled, and he was sure that it could have had nothing to do with Hank's disappearance.

None of the drogers had left the tavern on that day, or for two days subsequently.

Indeed, they had just set out on their return trip, and in the mean time they had not been out of Hubbard's sight.

The only other people who had been there while Hemlock Hank was at the tavern were Dick Ridsen and his Indian.

Ridsen had conversed for a little while with the missing man; but Josh Hubbard did not know what they were talking about.

Ridsen and Auguste, accompanied by Sol Barnes, had left the tavern shortly after Hank Ward started; but the landlord did not note the direction they took.

He had no reason to suspect them of meditating any harm to Hank, and was entirely sure that the drogers had not molested him after he left the tavern.

When he was asked what he supposed had become of the missing man, Josh Hubbard could only shake his head and wonder.

He had not the remotest idea, and could not venture even the faintest kind of a guess.

Hank Ward was duly sober and fully able to take care of himself, and no reason could be imagined why he should have fallen into any sort of trouble.

Of course there was no trail to follow, and any search or investigation must be entirely aimless and necessarily fruitless.

Charley Creed had his dinner at Hubbard's, and then set out to return to The Outlook, badly discouraged, and quite at a loss to conjecture what might have become of his friend.

When he reached the lake he transferred his snow-shoes from his feet to his back, and was strapping on his skates when he was startled by a strange sound.

It was utterly unlike anything he had ever heard before, and he could not imagine what it was or where it came from.

At one time it seemed to proceed from the forest behind him, and at another from the lake before him; but there was surely nothing on the lake.

Then it came nearer, and suddenly it deepened and contracted into a yell.

A yell so wild, unearthly, and unutterably horrible, that it fairly made the hair rise on his head.

He hastily finished strapping his skates, jumped up, and started out on the lake.

Hardly had he left the shore when that yell broke out again, louder and fiercer than before, and so near that he was then thoroughly alarmed.

Looking back, he saw some dark objects flying among the trees, and their great speed and savage yelps, together with their shape and color, told him what they were.

He had never seen their like before, but recognized them from descriptions he had read and heard as the dreaded gray wolves, migratory animals that were then becoming numerous in those woods.

So swiftly did they pursue him along the shore, that he was glad that he was out on the ice, where his skates could do better work than their feet.

He sped away with strong and rapid strokes, feeling safe where he was.

But a howl that arose directly behind him soon convinced him that his confidence was a delusion.

Looking back again, he saw his pack of foes following him on the ice as swiftly, it seemed, as they had pursued him on the shore.

Still he was not seriously alarmed.

He was a splendid skater, and had not yet put forth his full powers.

Although he had a good start, he realized the fact that he would have to do his best, and struck out at the top of his speed.

It would not do.

The nearness of the howls told him that they surpassed him in fleetness, and another glance behind showed him that they were gaining rapidly.

There were four of them, and they were fiercely in earnest.

Even if they should fail to overtake him, the lake would come to an end, and then they would have him.

What was he to do?

There seemed to be nothing for it but to draw his revolver and take the desperate chances of a fight with the ravenous brutes.

As he put his hand to his belt for that purpose, the change of attitude, and perhaps an involuntary motion following the bent of his mind, gave him a change of direction.

His skates carried him out of his course and nearly at right angles to it.

The next moment, and before he could fairly realize what had happened, the four wolves shot by him at full speed, but evidently using their best endeavors to stop or to turn.

Still they howled with rage as they passed him, but slipped and fell as they went on, their red tongues lolling out, the white tusks gleaming in their bloody mouths, and their dark, shaggy breasts flecked with foam.

Charley was suddenly and joyfully enlightened, and he blessed the man who first invented skates.

The formation of the feet of the wolves was such that though they could make wonderful time on the ice, they could only run in a straight line.

Consequently he would be able to avoid them by dodging and turning, and the lake afforded ample room for the exercise of that strategy.

By the time the wolves had recovered their footing and made the turn, he was speeding down the lake, well in advance of them.

Again they followed and overtook him, and again he wheeled quickly, well knowing what he was about this time, and confident of the success of his new expedient.

He had his revolver out, and used it with judgment and skill.

As the brutes shot by him again, vainly endeavoring to stop their headway, he fired at the leader, and dropped him.

As soon as his mates could regain their feet, they pounced upon their dead comrade, and in a few minutes there was nothing left of him but bones.

Charley Creed flew up the lake this time, and when it was necessary to dodge again, he perceived that he had gained considerably on his pursuers.

As he wheeled again, he fired another shot, crippling one of the wolves.

But a wounded wolf was as good as a dead wolf to the other howlers, and quickly they made a meal of him.

The young man could measure pretty closely the amount he would gain each time by turning and running, and he was sure that he could keep up that sort of thing at least as long as the wolves could.

But it was a serious question whether there was any real value in his gains.

Each of them only brought him nearer the head of the lake, where he would be obliged to take to the land, and then his foes would have him at a disadvantage.

The one thing necessary was the extermination of the wolves.

When he made the next turn, he again fired, aiming at the leader, but missed him.

He had then but three charges in his revolver, and there were two wolves left.

Easy arithmetic put the shots one ahead of the wolves but the calculation required that no more shots should be wasted.

He made a short spin down the lake, and

came to a full stop when he turned, firing again at the leader as the wolves flew by.

This time he dropped his quarry, and then he considered himself good for the wolf that was left.

But the skulking brute, finding himself alone, with none of his race remaining to back up his enterprise, lost heart and abandoned it.

He turned tail, and fled, without stopping to taste his dead comrade.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SOLITARY SEARCH.

CHARLEY CREED, greatly relieved by the disappearance of the last of his foes, skated at his ease to the shore at the head of the lake.

There he exchanged skates for snow-shoes, and glided slowly over the crusted snow that covered the slope.

It was nearly dark when he reached the foot of the cliff, and sounded his whistle as a signal of his return.

His friends had evidently been expecting him and looking for him, as the rope was let down almost instantly, and he was soon raised to the top of the cliff.

The small budget of news that he brought concerning Hemlock Hank was quickly emptied, and it proved to be as unsatisfactory to the others as it was to himself.

His difficulty with the wolves he reserved for the present, but related it in all its details at supper-time.

This story had a different effect upon all except the Indian, upon whom it seemed to have no effect at all.

Mattie Marley shuddered at his peril, rejoiced at his escape, and declared that he should never be allowed to go on such an expedition again.

Solon Marley may have had similar feelings; but they were overshadowed by another thought that had taken possession of him.

"Those gray wolves are becoming altogether too plentiful and dangerous in these parts," said he. "I am afraid that our friend Hank Ward may have fallen in with a pack of the brutes, and that they made an end of him."

Charley Creed scouted the idea.

"Hank has lived too long in the woods," he said, "to allow the wolves or any other beasts to get ahead of him."

"But something has got ahead of him, and what can it have been but the wolves? He was entirely unarmed when he left here, and he carried no skates, nor even a pair of snow-shoes."

"He would not have needed snow-shoes," replied Charley, "as the snow had not begun to fall when he left Hubbard's and the storm need not have hindered him from getting here."

"You know, Mr. Creed, what a narrow escape you had from those brutes. If it had not been for your revolver, you might have disappeared and we could never have guessed what had become of you."

"That is true; but Hank understands their ways so much better than I do. I can't think of him as having met such a fate."

"It is horrible, to be sure; but what else can we think of? I am seriously afraid that his loss must be charged to the wolves."

"What do you think of it, Louis?" asked the girl.

The Indian was ready with an answer, and it was an answer that was quite unexpected by the others.

"Wolves," he replied. "Yes, 'twas wolves. One white wolf—name Dick Ridsen. One red wolf—name Auguste. Mebbe one long, thin wolf—name Sol Barnes."

This put a new face on the affair.

Though Louis could give no good reason for his belief, except that he knew Sol Barnes to have a spite against Hemlock Hank, it found favor with the others, who began to invent arguments to sustain it.

It was at the worst much more agreeable than the wolf-pack theory.

The fact that Ridsen, with the other two in his company, had been seen conversing with Hank at Hubbard's, and the further fact that they left the tavern shortly after he went away, were given fully as much weight as they deserved to have.

Nobody could pretend to say what reason those three might have had for molesting Hank Ward, or for causing his disappearance.

The fact that he was up there in the company of Charley Creed, son of the senior partner of the firm of Creed & Ralston, ought to have absolved Dick Ridsen from that suspicion; but it was not considered.

"Mebbe Sol Barnes raise a row, and Hank fight 'um," suggested Louis.

There was nothing to support or to disprove this suggestion; but it was accepted.

"Louis go find 'um," was the Indian's concluding remark, and the next morning he left The Outlook for that purpose.

Charley Creed was anxious to accompany him; but Louis had not forgotten how stubbornly the young man insisted on going to Hubbard's in his stead, and he had other reasons for wishing to undertake the expedition alone.

As he explained it, Charley would be one too

many—not enough for fighting, and too much for a secret scout.

He took a blanket strapped upon his shoulders, his rifle and ammunition, some dried meat and bread, and a hatchet attached to his belt.

These preparations said that he expected to camp out, and possibly meditated a long absence.

Besides the snow-shoes that he wore upon his feet, he carried an extra pair strapped on his back.

"For Hank," he briefly answered, when asked why he took the other pair.

His departure was attended by good wishes and earnest prayers for his success, and there was a feeling of relief when he left The Outlook, as if it was believed that his mission would not be an entire failure.

Louis was such a warm friend of Hemlock Hank's, that Solon Marley and his daughter knew, if Charley Creed did not, that he would leave nothing undone that could be effected by skill and courage and tireless endeavor, to discover and bring back the missing man.

At nightfall he brought up at a logging camp at a considerable distance from Mt. Katahdin.

It was the camp of Seth Sloman's crew; for whom Zeb Carter and his party had been finding timber and preparing the way.

Louis was known to several of them, and was heartily welcomed in true logger fashion.

He was reticent concerning his present whereabouts and occupation, and had no news to impart except concerning Hemlock Hank.

Even that he would not have told if his search for information had not compelled him to do so.

But he got no information that was of any value to him.

The lumbermen were as much surprised as grieved when they heard of the disappearance of a man who was loved by most and respected by all of them; but they had no theory to account for it.

Hank Ward had no enemies, they said, unless Sol Barnes, who had not returned to them, might be called an enemy; but they made little account of his hostility.

Zeb Carter and another declared their intention of going to Hubbard's the coming Sunday, and trying to take up the trail from there, though they admitted that they could have little hope of success if Louis should fail.

In the course of the evening the Indian inquired casually about Dick Ridsen and Auguste; but the loggers had not seen either of them since they began their winter's work, or since the disappearance of Hemlock Hank.

They supposed that the detective had gone back to the settlements.

That was not the opinion of Louis, in whom the seclusion of Ridsen and Auguste confirmed his belief that they knew something of the missing man.

In his view of the matter, they were probably hiding; but he could give a pretty good guess at their hiding-place.

He spent the night at the loggers' camp, and early the next morning started again on his solitary tramp, going by as direct a route as possible to the mountain and the pass that led up to the big basin.

It was not possible for him to avoid making something of a trail as he went into the basin; but he could at least keep himself out of the sight of any persons who might be there.

Before him lay a vast field of snow, with clumps of trees here and there, and mounds of snow scattered all over it.

The mounds of snow, as he well knew, were snow-covered rocks.

He went forward cautiously but swiftly, generally keeping one or more of the mounds in front of him, and stopping as he reached them to peer out from behind them and gaze at the snowy expanse.

Soon he saw something that made him pause and examine it carefully.

It was a large mound of snow, close under a cliff at one side of the basin.

He was well enough acquainted with the locality to be quite sure that there had been no large rock in that spot at the time of his last visit.

The excuse for that mound of snow must have arisen since then.

He advanced toward it slowly and with great caution until he again saw something that made him pause.

Something, too, that made him drop down behind the nearest mound of snow.

CHAPTER XXV.

FROM UNDER THE SNOW.

"SNOWED in!"

"It is a fearful phrase, and sometimes its meaning is death—slow and lingering death, but certain and terrible.

It did not have that meaning to Dick Ridsen and his companions when the detective made his announcement of the situation.

Though they fully appreciated its force, and recognized its probable inconveniences and discomforts, it did not frighten them as it might have done if they had been placed in different circumstances.

Even if the snow had drifted against and over the cabin to an almost impossible extent, covering it, say, to the depth of twenty or thirty feet, still they need not despair.

It was yet early in the winter, and melting rains might be expected before the mass should be added to.

Though they should find it impossible to escape, and should be compelled to stand a long siege under the snow embankment, they would not be badly off.

They had plenty of food and clothing, and could scarcely freeze under that heavy blanket of snow.

Of course they would be unable to cook their food without a daily supply of fuel; but they would be able to sustain life for a long time without cooking.

Equally of course they were not going to stay shut up there if it was possible to get out.

Every expedient would be tried before submitting to such confinement.

Their first thought was to try the roof, which was made of saplings laid upon stout logs and covered with boughs.

A hole was made in the roof, through which a quantity of snow came down.

Then a pole was thrust up through the opening.

It passed so easily through the soft snow, that there was no telling with certainty when it reached the air above, if at all.

But it was not doubted that there was a great deal of snow up there.

It was suggested that they might dig out by way of the roof; but this suggestion was negated after discussion.

There was but one place to deposit the snow that should be removed from the upward excavation, and that was the cabin.

When the interior was filled, what would they do with it then?

Besides, they would not gain much by getting on top of a snow-bank.

Similar objections prevailed against making an attempt to dig out by way of the door.

"I guess you've got me safe enough now, Mr. Dick Ridsen," remarked Hemlock Hank. "I am no more likely to run away than you are."

"Do you fancy that I mean to stay here?" rejoined the detective.

"Well, it looks as if we're all kinder boxed up for a while."

"But I am not fond of being boxed up, and I don't expect to stand it. I suppose we might get along for a while without wood or water; but it would scarcely be living if we should pull through it, and I mean to be comfortable as long as I can get about. No, Hank Ward, I don't intend to stay here."

"How do you think you are goin' to git out?"

"Keep your eyes open, and you will see that some things can be done, as well as others."

The detective set about his preparations deliberately and in a systematic manner.

First, the heavy door was lifted from its wooden hinges, exposing a solid face of packed snow.

Then he filled a small can with gunpowder, and made a long fuse.

Then he dug a hole into the snow at the ground for a little distance, necessarily depositing in the cabin the snow that he took out.

He crawled into the hole, which was just large enough to admit his body, and left the can of powder at the end, attaching the fuse.

The door was set up against the opening to keep the snow out, and the fuse was fired.

"He is goin' to blow us up," observed Hemlock Hank, as he led a movement toward the other end of the cabin.

"I am going to blow up something, bet your life," responded the detective, who prudently retired in the same direction.

The fuse fizzed, and its sputtering light disappeared under the door, and the result was anxiously awaited from the other end of the cabin.

Sol Barnes and the Indian had got down behind the boxes, and Hemlock Hank was squeezed into a corner; but Dick Ridsen stood out and faced the music, though at a reasonable distance.

The music was disappointing in respect of sound.

There was a dull, smothered explosion, that made things shake; but the greatest noise was caused by the door, that suddenly flew inward, and fell on the earthen floor with a rattling crash.

At the same time the cabin was filled with flying particles of snow, that entered as if blown by a strong wind, and settled upon everything and everybody.

No damage had been done.

It remained to be seen whether any good had been effected.

As soon as he was able to see through the cloud of snow, the detective shook himself, and hastened to the doorway.

The great mass of snow outside had been riven and shaken up and scattered by the force of the explosion.

Had it settled back in the places from which it had been driven?

No—at least, only to a partial extent.

There was a gap through which daylight was visible, and that was sufficient for Dick Ridsen.

"We can see our way through," said he, "and all we've got to do now is to work our way through."

This was easier to say than to do; but, by the use of much labor and no little judgment, a path was finally beaten to the outer air that was both safe and reasonably convenient.

The rest was a matter of detail.

The snow that was in the cabin was carried out up the path, and the hinges of the door were changed so that it would open inwardly, and the hole in the roof was closed.

Then a path was beaten to the nearest timber, and the necessary work of getting in wood was begun.

All this required so much time as well as labor, that when night closed in on the cabin they had only stored fuel enough to last them until morning.

But they were very thankful for that.

They were no longer hopelessly snowed in, and a fire made a vast difference in their situation.

The next day was spent by all the party, including Hemlock Hank, in beating paths and getting in wood.

A good supply of fuel was prepared and stored, and at the same time they made heavy inroads on Dick Ridsen's stock of provisions.

Then came a heavy rain that lasted all day and night, keeping them indoors.

Under the rainfall the snow disappeared rapidly, but was still deep on the ground.

After the rain came a sleet storm and a hard freeze, which left the crusted snow in fair condition to travel.

That is to say, they would have been able to travel if they had been possessed of snow-shoes; but there was not a pair in the party.

Dick Ridsen had not expected that his stay in the woods would last into the winter.

Auguste had calculated on returning to the settlements with his employer before cold weather set in.

Solomon Barnes had left the remnant of his belongings at Zeb Carter's camp.

Hemlock Hank had been captured "dry so," with not even a weapon on his person with the exception of his hunting-knife.

There was a good crust at the surface of the snow, but not such as could be depended on, as it was liable to break under the weight of a man.

Dick Ridsen was sure that Hemlock Hank could not get away without snow-shoes to aid his flight; but he wanted some for himself, and Auguste was equally anxious to be able to travel.

The only thing to do was to manufacture what they needed, and in that the difficulty was that they had no thongs nor anything to make them of.

When they had prepared the frames they set at work to lace them with bits of cord and rope that had come with Ridsen's supplies, expecting to patch out the job by cutting up some of their clothes.

It was Sol Barnes that helped them to something that was vastly better than those scraps.

All felt the want of fresh meat, and the lengthy lumberman, taking one of the two rifles that were in the cabin, had sallied out as far as the beaten paths would allow him to go, hoping to see and shoot something that was eatable.

He did see something.

It was a pair of moose, that were coming directly toward him, unconscious of his presence.

He dropped down behind one of the mounds of snow that dotted the basin, and quietly awaited the approach of the noble game.

The moose came on slowly, breaking through the crusted snow at every step.

When they were quite near his position, the concealed hunter fired at the first, a magnificent animal, with broad, branching antlers.

The bullet struck him fairly in the breast.

He turned to fly; but the first bound he made in the snow overcame him, and he fell heavily.

His companion had made good his escape.

Sol Barnes arose from his concealment, and cautiously approached the quarry, marveling at the success of his lucky shot, as the moose is a hard creature to kill.

He could not make sure of his work with another shot, as he had neglected to bring any more ammunition; but there could scarcely be a doubt that the animal was dead.

But the scene changed instantly.

With a sudden bound the moose was on his feet, dropping goutts of blood from his deep wound, and maddened by pain and rage.

Sol Barnes perceived his peril too late, and turned to fly.

But he broke through the crust of snow, and the moose sprung upon him before he could extricate himself.

The sharp hoofs knocked him down, and the terrible horns cut into his flesh to the bone.

He clasped his arms around the antlers, striving to draw himself so close to the noose that he could not be hurt.

But the infuriated beast lifted him up out of

the snow, shook him off, and sprung upon him again.

He was then completely disabled, and his senses left him under the incessant renewal of the frantic attacks.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SNOW-SHOES IN DEMAND.

AUGUSTE had heard the report of the rifle, and had run out to see what Barnes had shot.

Soon the report was followed by a yell of agony at a distance, and Dick Ridsen snatched up his rifle and ran out.

He met Auguste, unusually excited, coming back for a gun.

"What is the matter?" demanded the detective.

"Big moose—kill 'um long Sol."

Hank Ward heard the Indian's answer, and stepped into the cabin to get an ax.

When Ridsen reached a position from which he could look over the snow, he saw the big moose out there, stamping and thrusting with hoofs and horns at something that seemed to have no capacity of resistance.

He hastened to the rescue of his new ally, though it was to be feared that Sol Barnes was already beyond the reach of help.

The moose looked up as he approached, and seeing a new object on which to vent his rage, charged him with lowered head.

Ridsen fired as the animal bounded toward him, and made a good shot.

Again the moose fell over, bleeding freely.

Again he staggered to his feet, and frantically plunged at the detective, who was then defenseless, except for his discharged rifle.

But Hemlock Hank was close behind him with an ax, and at the right moment he stepped forward to take the brunt of the combat upon himself.

As the moose charged he brought the ax down on the skull bone between the spreading antlers, and the big beast dropped like a struck bullock.

The next moment Auguste leaped upon the fallen monarch and cut his throat.

Sadly they went forward to the spot where Sol Barnes was lying in the snow, a tumbled and motionless mass.

They found him terribly mangled and covered with blood, most of which had probably come from the veins of the moose.

He was quite dead, every bit of the breath of life having been trampled out of his body.

A litter was made, and the remains of the lengthy lumberman were borne to the cabin.

Before the day ended the snow was scraped away from a narrow spot within a clump of trees, and a shallow grave was dug, in which all that was mortal of Sol Barnes was deposited.

His grave was covered with a pile of stones, to keep it from desecration by the wolves, and possibly for future identification.

Though all were sad, there were no mourners at the funeral.

He was a man who had made few if any friends, and each of those who helped to bury him had a recent reason for despising him.

Only Hemlock Hank had a good word for the departed.

"He was a sour crittur," said Hank; "but mebber he had plenty to sour him. I guess he must have had his good p'int. He's got a wife and baby down the river, and I'll try to look arter them when I go back."

"When will that be, Hank?" inquired the detective.

"Can't say. I hain't quite made up my mind yet."

"You may go as soon as you want to, if you will tell me where to find Solon Marley."

"I couldn't stir a step on those terms, Cap, and that's a fact."

The meat of the moose was saved, together with his hide and his great antlers.

"We will have plenty of buckskin for shoe-thongs now," said Dick Ridsen; "but it was a heavy price that we paid for it."

Hank Ward was allowed considerable liberty at that time, though he was doubtless continually meditating ways and means of escape.

Since the number of his guardians had been lessened by one, it was reasonably possible for him to get away by force.

He might get possession of a gun, shoot Ridsen down unawares, and overcome the Indian.

But the shedding of human blood was in the highest degree repugnant to him, and it was one of his maxims that the easiest way is always the best.

He could go outside as he chose within sight of the cabin; but there were two facts that prevented him from running away.

He was closely watched, and he had no snow-shoes.

It would be impossible for him to make any sort of progress as the snow then was, without snow-shoes.

Ridsen and the Indian were each making a pair for himself, and perhaps the captive might steal a part of the results of their labor when they were finished.

Shortly after the death of Sol Barnes he went

out with the others to cut wood at a little distance from the cabin.

Auguste was anything but fond of that kind of labor; but his employer insisted that he should do it, and stood by him to see that his work was done faithfully and well.

Hemlock Hank, partially left to himself, strolled about among the trees, and wished he had a pair of snow-shoes under his feet.

Suddenly his attention was attracted to a large pine a rod or so from where he stood.

What turned his eyes in that direction was a low call, somewhat like that of the catbird.

The call was familiar to him.

As he looked, he saw the face of an Indian peer out from behind the tree.

The face was familiar to him, too, and he recognized it as the face of Solon Marley's Louis.

The Indian made a rapid pantomime, motioning toward the pass.

Hank shook his head, and pointed at his feet.

Louis showed him a pair of snow-shoes, set them against the tree; and glided swiftly away, concealing himself behind another tree.

Hank Ward broke away to the tree which the Indian had just left, put it between himself and his keepers, and proceeded to strap the snow-shoes to his feet.

Ridsen missed him. He looked around, saw nothing of his captive, and became alarmed.

"Hello, Hank!" he shouted. "Hank Ward! Where are you?"

"All right!" cheerily answered Hank. "I'm right here behind this tree."

He fastened the snow-shoes as quickly as possible, and as he rose to his feet he felt that he was the master of the situation.

When the detective looked for him again he had joined Louis, and the two had paused just within hailing distance.

"Good-by, Dick Ridsen!" shouted the tall lumberman. "I'll remember you to Solon Marley if I ever see him."

The detective reached for his rifle, but refrained from attempting to use it.

It was not a case for killing, and the Indian with Hank was armed, and they were gliding over the crusted snow so swiftly that they would soon be out of sight.

"Come, Auguste!" he ordered, as he started toward the cabin.

"What do?" inquired the Indian.

"To get the snow-shoes and follow them of course."

"No good," replied Auguste, shaking his head. "No can ketch 'um."

"It's too infernal bad that he should get off so easy, after all the trouble I have had with him."

"Heap bad; but Auguste find out one t'ing."

"What is that?"

"Dat Injun wid Hank is Louis—same Injun what went up mountain to ole man."

"Are you sure of that, Auguste?"

"Sartin. Know Louis plenty well."

"Then we must track them, and see where they go to. So Hank Ward does know where Solon Marley is, and they will go to him. Come, Auguste! We must start at once."

"No use," responded the Indian. "Heap long time to foller trail. Take one day fur dat. Trail keep till morrer."

Ridsen disconsolately admitted the force of this reasoning.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SO NEAR, AND YET SO FAR.

AT THE Outlook the period of Louis's absence was one of anxious expectancy.

They had no good reason for expecting any substantial results from his expedition, and yet they all did expect something, though, if they had been pinned down to it, they could not have said what it was that they expected.

It was not doubted that he had gone in search of the detective, and it was believed that he would be able to find him; but beyond that there was nothing but conjecture.

The day passed, and night came, and he had not returned.

But they had not expected him back so soon, as it was known that his search might last two or three days.

The next morning Charley Creed started on an expedition of his own.

He wanted a few of the supplies that were awaiting him at Hubbard's, and determined to go and get them.

Solon Marley advised him, and Mattie almost entreated him, not to go, reminding him of his adventure with the wolves.

But Charley was, as Hank Ward had described him, rather hard-headed, and he had no fear of the wolves.

In fact, he said that he would rather enjoy a brush with them.

And it is known to be a truth that lightning never strikes twice in the same place.

He took a toboggan that Louis had made and was wont to use for such journeys, together with his snow-shoes and skates, and did not neglect to carry his revolver.

He was let down to the foot of the cliff by Solon Marley and his daughter, and easily made the trip to Hubbard's.

There he picked out the goods that he wanted, taking care not to make too heavy a load, and strapped them on the toboggan.

After eating his dinner he set out for home, and made the return trip quickly and successfully, without any sort of an adventure.

The toboggan slid over the crusted snow without breaking through, and his snow-shoes and skates did such good service that it was not yet dusk when he reached the foot of the cliff.

He sounded his whistle for the rope, which was immediately let down to him by his expectant friends, and sent up his goods and the toboggan.

Finally he was himself hauled to the top of the cliff, where he was warmly welcomed and congratulated upon his safe return.

The stuff was taken to the cabin and stored, and Charley returned to the edge of the cliff to take care of the rope, as it needed to be protected from the weather.

Mattie went with him.

Hardly had they reached the windlass when a shrill whistle sounded from below.

"That is Louis!" joyfully exclaimed the girl, and she let the rope down on a run.

Again the whistle sounded, and they both wound up the rope, bringing Louis to the top of the cliff.

There was nothing to be learned from the stolid face of the Indian as he was hauled in and stepped from the sling to the plateau; but he was at once plied with questions.

"Louis find em two wolves," he answered—"one white wolf, one red wolf. Got cabin in big basin. Hank not in cabin. One wolf dead."

"One dead?" exclaimed Charley. "Which one is dead?"

"Sol Barnes."

"Did you kill him?" inquired Mattie.

"No."

"What killed him, then?"

"Moose."

"What are you letting the rope down for?" demanded Charley.

"Got 'em stuff down dere."

"But there is nobody there to make it fast to the rope."

"Louis ketch 'em. Help haul now."

Charley and the Indian pulled up the rope, and the pulley creaked, and the windlass strained.

"Your stuff is deuced heavy," muttered the young man, as he wondered what was at the end of the rope.

Mattie had stationed herself at the edge of the plateau, holding by the tree, and eagerly peering over the cliff.

Presently she uttered a joyful cry.

"It is Hank!" she shouted, and directly the rope was pulled in, and the missing man stood before them.

To say that he was warmly welcomed would be a faint expression of the joyous greeting he received.

His return was the occasion of such a demonstration as might almost make him wish to get lost again.

Mattie, with the assistance of Charley Creed, outdid herself in preparing supper for him, while he sat by the fire and recounted his capture and subsequent adventures.

"Of course they could never have learned anything from you, Hank," said the girl. "If we had known that they wanted you for that purpose, we would have laughed at them. We know that we can depend on you to the death."

"Well, I guess I ain't apt to go back on a friend. I sometimes think that I'm e'ena'most as hard-headed as Charley there. No, my child, they would never have got anything out of me, and I guess they couldn't have worried me much longer, either, as I had about made up my mind to slide out."

"But we owe your presence here to Louis, we know, and we will never forget that."

"That's so, and I will never forget him. He did a good job, and he couldn't have dropped on me at a better time. It was right smart in him to think of bringin' the snow-shoes. Jest think how cheap that Dick Ridsen must have felt when he saw us scootin' off, and knew that he couldn't foller us."

"The detective seems to be a very determined man," remarked Solon Marley.

"Determined? Well, I should say that he is about as solid in his way as old Katahdin. He is sot on follerin' up the business that brought him here, and I judge that nothin' short of death will take him off the track."

"Then I will have the fear of him always before me."

"You needn't, I should say. Leastways, not through the winter. I don't see how he is to git at us afore spring, anyhow."

"Mebbe foller trail," suggested Louis.

"That's possible, though it's a slow business, follerin' a snow-shoe trail. Supposin' they do foller it, where'll it bring 'em? Chug up ag'inst a high rock, and they can't fly."

It is true, as Hemlock Hank had said, that it is slow work following a snow-shoe trail—a fact

of which Dick Riden and Auguste had ample opportunity to become convinced.

Such a trail is by no means a plain one when it is fresh, and the particles of snow are continually blowing over it, and the eyes of the trail-ers become dazed by constantly gazing at the white and shining surface.

The detective and the Indian left the big basin the morning after Hank Ward's return to The Outlook, and it was not until near the close of day that they reached the slope that led to the foot of the cliff.

As they went up the slope they could not doubt that they were on the right track, there being quite a plain trail there, and the marks of a toboggan clearly visible.

At the foot of the cliff they had abundant evidence of the recent presence of the men they had followed.

Not only were tracks plentiful, but the snow was beaten down, and there were marks to show that boxes and bundles had been unloaded there.

"We have tracked them to their den," said the detective. "Their den is up there at the head of this cliff. It seems to me—though it is hard to say, since the appearance of everything has been so greatly changed by the snow—that it must be the spot where I thought I saw some people at the time that forest fire came down the mountain. They must have had some way of escaping the fire. But how did they get up there? That is the question."

"Tacklefall," concisely suggested Auguste, who had been using his sharp eyes in looking upward.

He had seen the device of a tackle and fall used by lumbermen in loading up logs, and had learned its name.

"That's the trick," responded the detective. "Of course it must be, as they can't fly. It seems to me that I see something like a pulley rigged to the tree that hangs over up yonder. I wish I had a glass, so that I could make sure."

"No good," remarked the Indian. "No can go up."

"You are right about that, Auguste. There is no chance for us at present. Somebody must have got up there to fix the tackle and fall, and where one man goes another can. There must be some way besides this of getting up; but there is no use in trying to find it now."

"Too much snow, Missa Riden. Too much ice."

"Yes, the winter knocks us, and we must wait for spring, though it is infernally hard to be so near to my man, and not able to get at him."

"Camp right here," suggested the Indian.

"I guess you haven't read the Bible, Auguste, where it says that the net is spread in vain in the sight of any bird. No, that scheme won't work. The winter has cut us off."

"Mebbe go home," observed Auguste.

"We must go somewhere right soon, and I see that the darkness has cut us off from getting back to our camp just now. We will go on to Hubbard's, and pass the night there. In the morning I will let you know what conclusion I have come to."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN THE SPRING-TIME.

It was spring.

The long and hard winter was over, with all its inconveniences and discomforts.

Not quite all, perhaps; for it was as yet but early spring, and there was still a great deal of snow on the ground, especially where it had drifted into heaps, and the "going" was terribly bad, the earth being very soft where it was soft at all, and elsewhere icy or slushy.

But the spring rains had been falling, instead of the winter snows, and the little brooks had become torrents, and the rivers were breaking up, and already the lumbermen were beginning to send the logs on their long journey downstream.

Soon the snow would entirely disappear, and the trees would be clothed in green, and the migratory birds would return, and all nature would rejoice.

Up on the plateau which Mattie Marley had named The Outlook spring came earlier than elsewhere, in spite of its altitude.

It was kissed and caressed by every ray of sunshine, from morning until evening, and was so shut in by the mountain at its back that the cold northerly winds could not touch it.

Consequently it was already clear of snow, and Mattie was already thinking of beginning her garden.

There was even a suggestion of summer in the mild and balmy air as she walked forth on the plateau with Charley Creed, their feet sinking in the rich and steaming earth.

Below the wide reach of forest was covered with haze that nearly shut it from view; but up there all was bright and sunny.

She was describing to the young man the method on which the garden had been laid out for the previous year, and planning improvements for the coming season.

"I am very thankful," she said, "to my father's good friend in Bangor, who was so thoughtful as to send us a fine stock of seeds

with our last supplies. It is a blessing to know that we have one friend there who is true to us, in spite of the trouble that father has fallen into."

"You would find plenty of friends there," observed Charley. "You could never lack for friends anywhere."

She sighed, and went back to the subject of the garden.

"Now that I have plenty of flower seeds, I shall have some nice walks made, and will border them with blooming plants, and that will give me plenty of occupation, as well as much pleasure."

"You talk as if you were going to stay here forever," said Charley, who had not been taking a lively interest in her gardening projects.

"I must try to make the best of things," she meekly answered.

"But you are not going to stay here!"

"Indeed?" she retorted, but with a wondering and wistful tone in her voice.

"No, indeed. Not a bit of it. We have got to come to a plain understanding among us here, and it is not a bit too soon to begin. You know that I love you, Mattie."

"You have told me so often enough, I was going to say; but, really, I doubt if you could repeat it too often to please me."

"And I am sure that you love me. Don't you, Mattie?"

She could not resist the temptation to tease him a little.

"If you are sure, why need you ask?"

"But you do; don't you?"

"Well, yes, I believe I do, though it was not so very long ago that you wanted to shoot me."

"How can you bring that up against me? You know that I mistook your eyes for deer eyes, and they are dear eyes now—the dearest eyes I ever knew."

"That is not badly said, Charley, unless you are attempting to make a joke."

"I was never more in earnest in my life than I am now, and I mean to say that I, loving you as I do, could never bear the thought of leaving you here."

"Yes, you must go away," she answered, and then there were tears in her voice.

"And you must go with me, Mattie," he said, in a masterful way. "You shall not stay here. You must go with me and become my wife."

"What! and leave my father?"

"No—he shall go with us."

"He will not."

"But he must."

A look of pain came over the girl's face.

"He can never be persuaded to do that," said she. "Nothing would induce him to go back to Bangor. You cannot know how much he dreads, innocent as he is, the thought of being tried, and perhaps imprisoned."

"Yes, I do know. I believe that I understand his feelings. He must be persuaded to go. I am sure that he would be safe there, that the difficulty can be settled."

"No, Charley—it is impossible. This is a hard trial for me. I must choose between you two, and of course I cannot leave my father."

"You shall not leave him. I will speak to him at once. I will ask him for you, and will assure him that all will be well when you are my wife."

"It is you who must speak, then. I could never bring myself to mention the subject to him."

"It is I who will do it. Don't worry, my dear. I have always had my own way, and I mean to have it now."

Charley Creed was as good as his word.

He did speak to Solon Marley, and without any loss of time.

But he found the task he had undertaken a more difficult one than he had supposed it would be.

It was not the obstinacy of the old gentleman that stood in the way, so much as his timidity.

He became an abject coward when the subject of his return to Bangor was mentioned.

When Charley spoke of his desire to marry his daughter, he was fairly frightened.

"Is it possible?" he exclaimed. "You—a Creed, the only son of the head of the firm that I am accused of robbing—want to marry my daughter?"

"That is the exact truth, Mr. Marley. I love Mattie, and she loves me, and what is to come of it but marriage? She must become my wife, and you must go back to Bangor with us, and there all your troubles shall be brought to an end."

"It is impossible, Mr. Creed. The law will take its course, and there can be but one result, unless something should happen that is utterly beyond all calculation."

"The law will not worry you. For my sake, if for no other reason, my father will see that you are righted."

"That means that I would be protected from prosecution and permitted to live under the shadow of a dark disgrace. That would be no gain for me or my child."

"As the father of my wife, Mr. Marley—"

"That will do," interrupted the old man. You mean well, my young friend; but you are too ready to look on the bright side. I could never return to Bangor and live there on sufferance. Besides, if your father should be willing to put a stop to the prosecution, there is another who would step in and say that it should go on. That is my brother-in-law, who pursues me with the most bitter enmity."

As Charley Creed was unable to make any impression upon Mattie's father, he called in Hemlock Hank, and implored his assistance, placing the case before him as earnestly and eloquently as he could.

Hank was more than friendly to both parties, but Solon Marley was his oldest friend.

He would sooner cut off his right hand than do or advise anything that might injure the unfortunate old man.

Consequently he found himself placed in a difficult position—unable to decide what would be for the best.

He was inclined to favor Charley's proposition, especially as it appealed strongly to the sentimental side of his nature; but he could add nothing to the arguments that the young man had advanced.

The discussion in the cabin became exciting, and the three men went out on the plateau to breathe the fresh air.

Charley Creed repeated his arguments there, and Hank Ward brought forward an idea to help him.

"That's one p'int to be considered," remarked the tall guide. "It's that durned detective, Dick Riden."

"Think of that!" exclaimed the old man. "I told you, Mr. Creed, that there is one man who will not allow the prosecution to fall through. That is my brother-in-law, your father's old partner, Stephen Ralston. He has even persecuted me to the extent of sending an officer up into these wilds to find me and arrest me. How can I ever escape his hatred?"

"Supposin' we look at it clear through," replied Hank. "Dick Riden has got on your trail, and he will follow it to the end, no matter what time it takes. You ain't safe from him here."

"Do you suppose he is anywhere about here now?" inquired Charley.

"Yes—of course he is. I'd as soon expect the sun to rise in the West, as for him to quit a trail when he's once got his nose to it."

"But Louis went over into the big basin twice during the winter, and he reported that those men were no longer in the cabin there—that they had broken up housekeeping and moved away."

"Yes—moved away—that's the word. No tellin' where they've moved to. But you may depend on it that Dick Riden has never had the least idea of givin' up the job, unless he's got orders from head-quarters to do so, which ain't a bit likely if Steve Ralston is backin' him."

"That must be regarded as a sure thing," said the old man, shaking his head sadly.

"And the p'int is now," continued Hank, "whether it is goin' to pay you to stay here, until he gets to the end of the trail and catches you."

"That's it!" exclaimed Charley. "Would it not be better to go back to Bangor of your own accord, as a free man, than to be carried there as a prisoner?"

"You put it plainly, Mr. Creed, but rather cruelly," answered the old man.

"Charley does kinder turn up the rough edge," said Hemlock Hank; "but I don't know, arter all, if he hasn't said jest the word that ought to be said. We might fight off the detective. I'm ag'in' the sheddin' of blood, but I don't know, if the wu'st come to the wu'st, but I might even git r'iled up to that."

"No, no," feebly protested Solon Marley.

"It would go hard with me to kick ag'in'st the law, and it's never a good thing to do, even in a good cause; but—Heaven and earth! Look there!"

His two companions instantly glanced in the direction he indicated.

He was pointing up the narrow saddle-back pass that connected the plateau with the spur of the mountain.

Two men were there.

They had not reached the top or edge of the pass, but were near enough to be plainly seen from the plateau.

It was clear that the position which they had attained could only have been arrived at by climbing up the steep side of the pass—an undertaking of great difficulty and danger.

One of them, as the gazers could easily see, was a white man, and the other was an Indian.

"Who are they?" anxiously inquired Charley Creed.

"Who are they?" repeated the guide. "Don't you know who they are? That white man is Dick Riden, and the other is his Injun."

Charley started toward the cabin.

"Where are you goin'?" demanded Hank. "To get my rifle. We must stop them where they are."

The white man had reached the top of the

saddleback, and there he stood, gazing at the plateau.

"Halt!" exclaimed Solon Marley, in an unusual tone of authority, as he laid his hand on Charley's shoulder.

"There must be no blood shed for me. Let them come, and do not try to hinder them. It is fate, and I must accept what is sent to me."

But fate, if it was fate, took a sudden turn.

Even as the old man was speaking, a low, growling sound was heard, followed by a deep roar.

The Indian, who had not yet gained the edge of the saddleback, seemed to be sliding down the steep declivity.

Risden seized a stunted tree; but the tree started to slide in the same direction.

Then the roar deepened, and in a moment the pass sunk and disappeared, with the exception of a small portion, which was far below the plateau.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A MOONLIGHT FLITTING.

WITH the disappearance of the pass a cloud of mist arose, doubtless from the moist and loosened masses of stone and earth; but there was nothing to explain the occurrence.

"What was that?" demanded Charley Creed, as soon as he could recover from his astonishment.

"A land-slide, my boy," answered Hemlock Hank.

"I don't pretend to understand that sort of thing; but I must say that it came just in the nick of time."

Solon Marley had sunk upon his knees, as if for the purpose of prayer; but he quickly rose again.

"I was going to give thanks for my deliverance," said he; "but I find that I have not the heart to do so while it is to be feared that my gain is the great loss of others."

"As how?" inquired Hank.

"Those two men, I am afraid, have been dashed into eternity."

"Serve 'em right, if they have; but you needn't worry about that, old friend. They are alive and kickin'—or Dick Risden is, anyhow."

"How can that be?" demanded Charley. "How can they have gone down with that slide and not have been killed?"

"Well, sonny, that Dick Risden is one of the men that nothin' can kill. He's like a cat—allus bound to light on his feet—and I should say that he's got as many lives as a cat. I don't know about the Injun; but I'd be willin' to bet a season's wages that Risden is safe."

"Then the same trouble comes up again, Mr. Marley, and the question is as I stated it a while ago."

Mattie had hurried to them directly after the crash caused by the land-slide, and was listening attentively to the discussion.

"Charley is right," said Hank, "and I guess that he didn't put the thing a bit too strong. The pass has dropped out pretty much, and there don't seem to be any way of gittin' up here in front; but there's t'other side, and the detective is sure to find his way to this place in time. We never thought that he could git where he was a bit ago; but he did it. The question is, old friend, jest as Charley says, whether it is best to go of your own free will, or to be ketch'd and carried off by Dick Risden."

"Surely we must get away from here," put in Mattie. "We must go somewhere."

"Yes, we must go somewhere," admitted her father.

This was a great point gained, and Charley Creed pressed his advantage.

So did Hemlock Hank, who had been completely won over to his young friend's cause.

They were joined by Mattie, who did not press her opinions, but quietly agreed with the others.

This combined assault overcame Solon Marley, who promised that he would be guided by them and leave The Outlook.

As soon as he was converted to that belief, he became nervously anxious to depart as soon as possible.

"How can we get away, and when?" he asked eagerly.

"There is only one way to go," answered Charley. "We must go down the river, and land travel is impossible at this season, I suppose."

"How are we to travel, then? We have no boats."

"Only one that can count. I have my canoe; but that is not sufficient. We can manage that matter, though. Can't we, Hank?"

"Of course we can. I don't think that Seth Sloman's men have left the Wassataquoit yet. I will go over there, and we will knock up a wangun in short order."

"What is a wangun?" asked Mattie.

"A wangun, my dear, is jest a bateau, sech as the lumbermen use when they foller the logs down-stream. We won't need a big one, and I guess I can easy find lumber enough."

Their departure having been determined on,

no time was lost in carrying out the project and attending to all its details.

Hank Ward was peculiarly fortunate in his mission.

Seth Sloman's logging camp had been broken up, and the crew were just about to begin their voyage down the river.

But they had a large skiff for which they would have no further use—the same skiff which had served Zeb Carter and his party on their prospecting tour—and they were quite willing to dispose of it to Hank, who was glad to become its possessor, as it would serve his purpose admirably.

The skiff was concealed on the Wassataquoit, whither Charley's canoe was carried.

He and Hemlock Hank, with the assistance of Louis, worked hard in conveying to their boats sufficient provisions for the voyage, together with blankets and other necessities.

Mattie Marley employed her time in making a tent of some sheets she had in the cabin.

If not entirely waterproof, it would at least be a partial protection from the weather.

When all was in readiness, Solon Marley bid a tearful farewell to the cabin on the cliff; but Mattie and the others said good-by to it quite joyously.

It was dusk when they descended the cliff. Hemlock Hank, who was the heaviest, being let down first, followed by Solon Marley and Mattie.

Louis, who was the last to get off the plateau, let himself down, and then the rope was hauled out of the pulley and carried away.

Darkness came on as they took their way through the woods, it being their intention to make the trip to the Wassataquoit under cover of the night, and to drop down in the darkness, so that they should find themselves in the Penobscot when the next day dawned.

It was admitted that the purpose of this proceeding was to prevent the possible discovery of their manner of departure from Dick Risden.

"This looks like a moonlight flitting," said Charley Creed, as he walked by the side of the girl he loved.

"It looks like running away, and that is just what it is," responded Mattie. "But we must run away. I only hope and pray that this beginning may bring a good ending."

"We must make it end well, my dear. If Hank Ward will get us safely down the river, you may depend on me to make things right at the other end of the route."

"But father has not consented to go to Bangor. He says that he will not go there."

"Well, we will not worry about that at the start. For the present it is enough to know that we have him on the way down the river. Of course we will comply with all his wishes as far as we possibly can."

The moon was shining as they threaded the forest, taking the shortest route to the Wassataquoit.

But the ground was in very bad condition for traveling, being in some places still covered with snow, and in others with ice or water, and the earth soggy and treacherous to the tread.

Consequently the trip was not a pleasant one, and it was late when they got to the Wassataquoit.

They found the boats safe, with all the property they had concealed there, and began the voyage down the river as soon as they could load up.

But in their expectation of getting into the Penobscot by daylight or thereabout they were doomed to disappointment.

They had got but a little distance on their way when they encountered a log-jam.

It was a drive of logs that had been started from the head-waters of the stream, and had grounded at a shallow place, filling the narrow channel.

There the logs awaited the rising of the river and the coming of their owners.

It was not much of a jam, but sufficient to stop the voyagers.

Hemlock Hank made a survey of the situation, with the view of endeavoring to start the jam, but was soon convinced that any attempt in that direction would be unavailing, as there was not as yet enough water in the channel to float the logs.

There was nothing for it but to make a portage.

So the boats were unloaded and carried laboriously around the jam, and their contents were carried after them and placed in them again.

Hemlock Hank took passage in the skiff to help Louis manage it, Solon Marley and his daughter being their passengers.

Charley Creed controlled his canoe alone, but with the pleasant prospect of having Mattie Marley as a passenger part of the time after they got into the Penobscot.

The portage was such hard and tedious work that it was nearly dawn when it was finished, and it was broad daylight when they came in sight of Hubbard's.

Fortunately there was nobody stirring at the tavern—at least, nobody was visible—and they

passed by without stopping and almost without speaking.

So they swept down the swift current of the stream, and out into the broader channel of the Penobscot, where they considered themselves safe.

It was just then that their bright hopes were dashed down, and a cloud came over the moonlight flitting.

They had floated fairly out into the river when Hank Ward chanced to look back, and an exclamation that was almost an oath broke from his lips.

The others then looked back, and saw a sight that surprised and startled them.

On the point of land formed by the junction of the stream and the river there was a man standing, who was gazing at them as they were gazing at him.

Although but two of them had seen that man before, they instinctively knew who and what he was.

"Who is he, Hank?" almost breathlessly asked Charley Creed.

"That darned Dick Risden!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE LAND-SLIDE.

THROUGH the vast pine forest, an early day in spring, two men were wearily tramping.

They were Dick Risden and Auguste, and they were having anything but a pleasant time as they toiled over the wet and sodden ground, fording unexpected streams, finding torrents where no water had been before, climbing ridges, stumbling through ravines, making detours to avoid obstinate snow-banks that had thus far resisted the melting weather, and generally having a tedious and comfortless journey as they skirted the base of old Katahdin.

Their boat had been left on the same stream which they had ascended during the latter part of the previous autumn, and their provisions and other necessities had been carefully concealed near it, while they were undertaking an expedition which seemed to Risden to promise success.

With the exception of a small ax and a supply of food, they carried nothing but their weapons.

The detective's arsenal, however, included a six-chambered revolver, for use at close quarters if it should be necessary, and he was of the opinion that its use might be necessary.

"If any of those folks, Auguste," said he, "should show fight or attempt to resist me, I want you to hold back and leave the skirmish to me, unless you have to chip in in self-defense."

Without the slightest hesitation the Indian agreed to allow his chief to do the fighting.

"I hope that they will not do anything of the kind," continued the detective. "Hank Ward is a peaceable man, I am sure, and I shall meet them in the name of the law. But there is no telling what may happen."

They followed a deep ravine that led steeply up into the mountain, and quite a tough time they had of the ascent, as an icy torrent was rushing down the ravine, and they were forced to clamber, slowly and painfully, along its rough and rocky side.

But they safely reached their destination, at a point which the detective had located.

After a careful survey of the mountain in the neighborhood of the plateau to which he had followed Hemlock Hank and Louis, he had fixed upon that spot as the point from which his prey could be reached the most easily and directly.

He pointed out to Auguste the route that he intended to take.

It was plain enough; but its difficulties were such as might deter any but a very obstinate man.

The side of the ravine rose to a considerable height above them, steep and rough, and rocky for perhaps half the distance.

Above that point earth was more plentiful, and the ridge to its crest was heavily overgrown with stunted trees and bushes, which had not yet begun to put forth their spring foliage.

As the detective pointed upward, Auguste shook his head.

"No can climb," was his sententious remark.

"We've got to climb," replied Risden. "No use talkin', my boy. Up there we must go, and the sooner we begin the job, the better. Come on!"

It was hard work.

Dangerous work, too.

By dint of desperate climbing, boosting and pulling each other up, they succeeded in passing beyond the rocky limit of the ridge.

Above that point they had an easier time working their way over the soft earth and among the trees and bushes, which aided their efforts and enabled them to make better progress.

Soon they were in sight of the crest of the ridge, and then they had almost reached it.

They were also in sight of the plateau above and to the right of them, and Dick Risden, as he glanced in that direction, uttered a subdued cry of exultation.

"There they are!" he exclaimed. "I see Hemlock Hank, and there is the old man! He won't escape now before I can get to him. Come on, Auguste!"

He made a final struggle, and stood on the sharp edge of the saddleback pass, in full view of the man he was hunting.

But his joy was tempered by a cry of fear from Auguste.

The Indian, who was a little way below him, felt the earth slipping away from under his feet, and that was what had extorted the cry from him.

The next moment Ridsen experienced the same sensation, and the events that followed were so swift and startling that no record could be kept by the persons involved in them.

Ridsen at once realized what was happening.

It seemed as if the ridge was not only settling, but dropping away under him.

The fall was accompanied, not by a crash, but by a grinding, roaring noise, that might have given the impression of an earthquake.

Ridsen grasped a tree near him; but the next moment he had sunk out of sight of the plateau, and was going downward with a fearful rush.

It must have occurred to him that it was a good thing that he was at the crest of the ridge when the slide began.

Naturally it started from below, and the impulse was communicated upward.

No matter what the fall might be, it was much better to be on top of the mass than under it.

In the first instance a man might be broken; in the second he was sure to be crushed.

But the great difficulty was to keep on the top of the slide.

To achieve this result the detective exerted all his energies.

But everything was so sudden, and so utterly beyond his control, that he had no thought for more than the shadow of a plan, and it was mainly instinct that prompted his actions.

He could only scramble upward as he went downward, catching hold of everything he could reach that was above him as he was carried on, extricating himself to the best of his ability from the earth and rubbish that gathered around him, and all the time striving to keep himself on top of the sliding mass.

It happened in a moment—so quickly that the best description would be weak and halting.

Before the detective could collect his startled senses, the sliding mass of earth and stones and mountain growth went over the rocky part of the ridge, and dropped into the ravine, damming the icy torrent down there.

Dick Ridsen dropped with it; but he was not under it.

He had succeeded in keeping himself on top, and the branches of a tree to which he was clinging at the time broke his fall.

As Hank Ward said of him afterward, he was like a cat, sure to fall on his feet.

He picked himself up, and discovered, to his great delight, that he was entirely unharmed.

He found himself sound in bone, muscle and flesh.

Even his nerves were not shaken, so sudden had been the catastrophe, and so quickly the close had come.

He looked about for Auguste, but saw nothing of him.

He called, and was answered by a faint cry.

It was something to know that his useful assistant was still in the land of the living.

Ridsen followed the direction of the cry, and soon found the head and one of the arms of the Indian sticking up out of the earth and rubbish.

The detective hastened to his assistance, and found him very much alive, but full of pain, and terribly frightened.

By the most strenuous exertions Ridsen succeeded in extricating him from his painful but not perilous position.

Auguste was found to have sustained no serious injury.

That is to say, no bones had been broken; but his entire body was bruised, and the skin had been torn off in places.

When he was assisted to his feet, it was with great difficulty he could stand, and the main trouble was with one of his legs, which he seemed to be nearly incapable of using.

Ridsen placed him in a resting position, and sought their rifles.

He had not ceased to retain his own in spite of the slide, dropping it only when he went to dig out the Indian, and Auguste's rifle was found uninjured near where he was extricated.

The torrent that had been dammed by the slide was still howling down the ravine, and had already formed such a pond that it threatened soon to overpass the barrier and sweep the men from their position.

It was necessary that they should lose no time in getting away from there.

Fortunately the bed of the ravine below, owing to the stoppage of the mountain stream, was then nearly dry.

Ridsen formed his resolution instantly, and at once carried it into effect.

He made the Indian grasp him around his

neck, raised himself with his follower on his back, and, with the two rifles in his hands, picked his way over and among the earth and stones and debris of the slide, until he reached the bottom of the ravine.

Without stopping to take breath, he stumbled down the rocky path as rapidly as possible, and continued on his course until he was compelled to halt and rest.

As soon as he could, he took up his burden again, and hurried down the ravine until he reached its mouth, or the place where it widened out on either side.

There he walked upward and away from it to a turf spot under the trees, where sheer exhaustion compelled him to drop his load and fall by the side of the Indian.

The next moment the torrent, which had overflowed its dam, came tearing down the ravine.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FOUND AND LOST.

DICK RISDEN rested with Auguste.

At the time he was doubtless in the worst plight of the two, the tremendous strain which he had lately undergone having completely broken him down.

But he had immense recuperative powers, and was soon able to bestir himself and attend to the pressing needs of the moment.

The first thing that he did was to gather brush and bits of wood and start a fire, which soon made their situation brighter and more comfortable.

It was manifestly impossible for them to reach their camping-place that day, as night would soon close down upon them, and the Indian was not able to walk.

So they must of necessity pass the night where they were, and make themselves as comfortable as possible.

At the best there was precious little comfort to be extracted from their position, as the ground was wet, and the night was sure to be damp and cold, and they had no blankets to protect them.

But they had a fair supply of food, on which they supped reasonably well, toasting the slices of salt pork at the fire, and catching the drippings on their ship biscuit.

Such a meal might well rejoice the heart of a hungry man, and they were both hungry, in spite of pain and exhaustion.

It is probable that the detective was more troubled by the thought of what the catastrophe had taken from him, than by the catastrophe itself.

To have seen his prey almost within his grasp, and then to have it suddenly snatched from him—or himself snatched from it—by an act of providence which could not be foreseen or provided against—that was what drove the iron into his soul and twisted it there.

Of course they had seen him, and the sight would warn them to look out for themselves, no matter what view they might take of his probable fate.

There were plenty of fir trees at hand, and he cut a sufficient quantity of the boughs to make such a couch for himself and the Indian as would at least keep them off the wet ground.

Then he built up a big fire, throwing on the largest wood he could get hold of, and laid down by the side of Auguste with no covering but the sky.

Notwithstanding the coolness of the night, the detective slept well until morning, rising only when the cold warned him to mend the fire.

Auguste, owing to the pain of his bruises, was restless and uncomfortable.

In the morning it was necessary to get back to their camp, as they had no more food.

The Indian, though stiff and sore, was able to walk after a fashion, and he hobbled along slowly and with difficulty.

It was a very tedious and difficult journey, as they were frequently obliged to stop to rest; but they finally reached their camp, where they found fire and food and comparative comfort.

Ridsen attended to his follower's hurts as well as he could, and made him a good bed upon which Auguste rested, while his chief smoked his pipe and meditated upon his great disappointment.

Of course he had not the faintest idea of abandoning the pursuit.

If it was the Day of Judgment, and the last trump had sounded, he would make one more dash to secure his prey before the earth melted.

Even then, though it was getting late in the day, he was restless and uneasy in his anxious desire to start out and seek Solon Marley before he could escape.

It was only the condition of the Indian that prevented him from doing so.

His first duty was to his wounded follower, and Auguste was just then so helpless that it would not be proper to leave him.

But his condition had so far improved by the next morning that he was able to take care of himself and provide for his own wants.

So the detective left him there in camp, with

an ample supply of fuel, directing him to rest and make no unnecessary exertion.

As for himself, Ridsen did not know when he should return.

He was bound to get to the point which he had nearly reached the previous day, and could not say what length of time might be required for the accomplishment of his purpose.

He traveled as light as possible, carrying only his weapons and a supply of food, and struck off at once for the mountain.

Observation had convinced him that the plateau might be reached in a different direction from that which he had previously attempted—that is, from the rear.

That day's efforts were devoted to the labor of reaching the rear of the apparently unapproachable height, and a very difficult and discouraging task it was.

Climbing mountain spurs, fording mountain streams, ascending cliffs and descending ravines, was a very serious business at that time of the year, especially as he was unable to keep his goal in sight, and his course was to a large extent nothing but blind guesswork.

But he succeeded.

At last he climbed the right peak, made sure that he was headed in the right direction, and emerged upon the plateau from the rear.

The day was done then, and darkness had settled down upon the earth, but the moon was coming up over the tops of the trees.

"It is better so," he muttered. "If they have not gone off for good, it is not likely that they will be away at night."

Abundant evidences of occupation met him at The Outlook.

But it was recent occupation.

There is an unexplainable something about a deserted house that tells the story of desertion.

If it is merely closed, no matter how tightly, it has not the same forlorn and melancholy air that surrounds it when its occupants have abandoned it.

Then something of the life and spirit of its inmates seems to fill it and emanate from it, and one instinctively feels that it is yet a home.

A feeling of this sort took hold of the detective as he walked across the plateau.

It may have been that this feeling was partly inspired by his previous disappointment, and by his belief that the warning of his presence would cause Solon Marley to fly.

He approached the cabin, but there was no sign of life there.

He stepped to the door, and it opened readily to his touch.

The place was empty.

His bird had flown.

Most of the furniture of the former occupants was still there; but there were no more occupants.

Of course Solon Marley had fled; but whither had he fled?

It was not likely that he would again establish himself anywhere in the neighborhood, and there was but one direction that he could take at that season of the year.

He must go down the river, if anywhere.

In so doing it was highly probable that he and his party would start from Hubbard's, or would stop at Hubbard's for necessities, or would pass Hubbard's on the way.

He would at least be able to get some information concerning them at Hubbard's, and thither he must go to strike the trail.

He hastened to the edge of the plateau, seeking the spot where he had seen the pulley when looking upward from the foot of the cliff.

The windlass that they had left he easily found, and the pulley was still attached to the gnarled tree that leaned over the edge.

But the rope had been removed, and there was no possibility of getting down from the plateau in that quarter.

But it was on that side that he wished to descend, as the idea of returning by the long and difficult route by which he had come there was hateful to him.

His day's hard travel, following the exertions of the previous two days, had greatly wearied him, and the empty cabin invited him to tarry there and rest.

This was a strong temptation; but he resisted it.

True to his purpose, he examined the side of the plateau where the saddleback pass had sunk, and came to the conclusion that he could get down to what remained of the ridge.

With Dick Ridsen a thing that was possible was a thing that must be done, and this thing he proceeded to do.

The task of climbing down from the plateau called forth all his powers, forcing him to strain every muscle, and putting him in danger of limb, if not of life; but it was successfully accomplished.

He was in the habit of accomplishing whatever he undertook, and it was only in his pursuit of Solon Marley that fate had again and again interfered to baffle him.

But his obstinacy was of so tough a temper, that the more events worked against him, the harder he would work against events.

He got down to the ravine into which the pass had tumbled, and followed it to the forest at the base of the mountain.

Thence he tramped in as direct a course as he could follow to Hubbard's, reaching the tavern after midnight, tired, footsore—in fact, badly worn out.

He roused up Josh Hubbard, and got into the cabin, where a draught of spirits refreshed and seemed to invigorate him; but he tumbled into a bunk as soon as he had questioned the proprietor.

He got no consolation there.

Hubbard had neither seen nor heard anything of Hemlock Hank or any of the party of whom Ridsen was in search.

If he had been possessed of any information, it may be doubted if he would have imparted it, as Hank Ward had given him some hints that made him not over friendly to his present visitor.

Though the detective was so completely worn out, he failed to find relief in sleep.

The worry consequent upon the failure of his plans, and the uncertainty of the course he should next take, kept his brain whirling, and shut off the solace of slumber.

When he did fall asleep, he was harassed by the thoughts that pursued his waking hours, and by tormenting dreams from which he was glad to be aroused with a start.

Day was breaking when he finally abandoned the attempt, and tumbled out of his bunk.

Refreshing himself with another glass of spirits, he went out to cool his head and quiet his thoughts in the morning air.

He walked down the bank of the Wassataquoit until he came to the mouth of the stream, where its swift current poured into the Penobscot.

He sat down on a stump, and reflected as he gazed out on the river.

There he was to find his prey, if he was to find him at all.

That was the route he must take if he intended to journey in any direction.

But how was he to go? And how was it to be known when he would start, or if he had not started already?

If the Indian were well enough, he could take up the trail and follow it from the foot of the cliff below the plateau.

Dick Ridsen was strongly inclined to believe that he was woodsman enough to do that job, himself, if he should be obliged to.

But it would cost him considerable time, and time possessed a tangible value for him just then.

As he mused on these matters, he became drowsy, and soon fell into a half-dozing condition as he sat there on the stump.

From this he awoke with a start, and rose as he recognized the necessity of returning to the tavern.

Again he looked out on the river, and saw a sight that startled him.

Doubtless he only wished that he had seen it sooner.

A skiff was floating out into the channel of the Penobscot, preceded by a canoe of peculiar construction.

In the skiff he recognized Hank Ward and Solon Marley.

The other occupants were a woman and an Indian.

In the canoe was a young man alone.

Ridsen was nearly beside himself with rage and disappointment.

But he realized the fact that they were beyond his reach, and that he had no immediate means of getting at them.

It was a consolation to know that he had discovered them, and that he was sure of the route on which they had started.

He hurried back to the tavern, and speedily put himself outside of the breakfast that had been prepared for him.

Then he tramped to his camp as fast as his tired legs would carry him, and astonished Auguste with his news.

"I have found them, Auguste, and I have lost them. They have gone down the river, and we must start after them at once. Help me all you can now, as you shall have an easy time after we get afloat."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TRAILER TRAILED.

SETH SLOMAN'S crew of lumbermen, having broken up and quit their winter-quarters, were engaged in the business of forwarding to market the logs they had cut and hauled.

Part of them were scattered along a small stream, getting out the last of their belated timber, which obstinately insisted on running off into the woods or grounding at shallow places.

The others were already out on the east branch of the Penobscot, following the main body of logs, and trying to keep them out of trouble.

The last named party, camped for the night on the west bank of the river, with their piney pets going forward safely and nicely, were seated about their camp-fire, enjoying their pipes, swapping lies, and occasionally dropping

into the stream of talk a truthful story by way of variety.

A skiff came down the river, rowed by one man, and landed at their camp.

This was by no means an unusual occurrence at that time of the year; but the visitor was as warmly welcomed as if they had not seen a stranger in months.

He was well known to several of the party, who addressed him as Nate Stearns.

In appearance he was somewhat striking, being of burly, close-knit build, with a round little head, and a vast profusion of black hair and beard.

His eyes were also intensely black, and his face was nearly as dark as that of an Indian.

Nate Stearns was coarsely dressed in the style of loggers, and he had a dare-devil expression, speaking of recklessness of danger, and perhaps of less excusable recklessness in respect to other matters.

He was invited to sup on the remains of this meal, or to cook what pleased him, and was soon suited in that particular.

"Where'd you come from, Nate?" inquired Zeb Carter, as the visitor sat down and puffed his pipe among them.

"From Matt Harmar's camp. We were a good deal to the north'ard of you folks; but we broke up early, and got all our sticks into the river in good time."

"Old Harmar is a rusher," remarked Zeb.

"You bet he is. We've been worked hard all the season through, and for one I am glad it is over."

"And you are down ahead of the drive, Nate?"

"Quite a ways ahead of the most of it; but some of our sticks are here already, mixed up with yours and others, and I've come to look arter 'em."

"I thought I had noticed some logs with old Matt's mark on 'em. But you will need more help, Nate, if there should be trouble."

"Some more of the boys will be down afore long to help me. They'll be glad enough to get out from under Harmar's eye. He's one of the real Old Stormy sort, you know. What new wrinkle do you think struck in on him this season?"

"Did he want the men to stay in quarters every Sunday and hear him preach?"

"Wuss'n that. There hasn't been a drop of liquor in camp all winter, and no sort of a chance to git a blessed bit. The old cuss took it into his head that the crew would work better without liquor."

"How did the plan seem to take?"

"We did lots of work—no doubt about that—and we had precious little fun, too."

"Well, Nate, for my part I believe in the moderate use of liquor; but there's doubt about its being a good thing, and people seem to be gittin' more and more inclined to shut down on it. I've noticed that men who git along without it generally git along well. I shouldn't wonder a bit, Nate, if it was a good thing for you to have your supply cut off for a few months. It was liquor, you know, that got you into that bad scrape."

The visitor's face clouded, and his eyes flashed.

"Curse that scrape!" he exclaimed. "Curse the man who got me into it!"

"What man are you speaking of, Nate?" asked another of the party.

"That Boston detective, Dick Ridsen."

"How did he git you into the scrape?"

"He got me into the worst part of it—into the State prison. If it hadn't been for him, I'd never ha' been sent there, cuttin' off all my chances and spoilin' my life. And he never had any right to send me there."

"Why, Nate, do you claim that you were innocent?" demanded Zeb Carter.

"No, not innocent, but not near as bad as that man made me out to be. As you say, Zeb, it was liquor that got the best of me, and I meant no harm. But he was wantin' to git up a reputation as a detective about that time, and he make it off o' me. If I ever find a chance to git even with him, I'll make a reputation that'll satisfy me for a while."

As he spoke, a vindictive look came into the man's face, showing that he was bitterly in earnest in what he said.

"Nate Stearns," said Carter, speaking slowly and deliberately, "do you know that Dick Ridsen is in these parts?"

"No! Do you mean to say it's so? Where is he?"

"Came up here last fall. Been here all winter. Leastways, som'ers in the vicinity. Anyhow, he turned up in the spring."

"What brought him here?"

"Came up to hunt Solon Marley, an old gentleman of Bangor, who was hidin' about here. The law had some sort o' claim ag'inst the poor old man. Mebbe you've heard of him."

"Yes, indeed. I know all about Solon Marley and his trouble. He was the only friend I had when I was in that scrape. It war he who started that petition that got me pardoned out. And Dick Ridsen has been up here huntin' him. Oh! I wish I'd known it sooner. Where is he?"

"Where is which?" replied Carter. "Marley or the detective?"

"Either of them. Both of them."

"Well, Nate, the old man and his darter have gone down the river. Hank Ward is with them, and a young chap from Bangor."

"Then they are safe from his clutches."

"Not quite. Dick Ridsen and an Injun have gone down arter them."

"How far behind?"

"Not so far as I might wish, between you and me. The old man and Hank have got a good start; but the detective can out-travel 'em, I guess, and there's lots of logs in the river that are apt to jam and stop boats, and I'm afraid that the party ahead ain't enough ahead."

Nate Stearns meditated, but with an eager look on his face.

"D'ye think that feller is far below here?" he asked.

"He passed us early in the afternoon," Carter replied. "He can't have got far afore night overtook him, though he's a hard man to stop."

"And you don't care to have him ketch the old man?"

"Well, I'd rather he wouldn't, and the rest of us feel about the same way."

"And if you should happen to hear that he had been stopped, or upset in any way, you won't be hintin' around that I might have had somethin' to do with it?"

"Not much, my boy; but you mustn't git into another scrape."

"I will take care of that, Zeb."

"Good luck to you, then!"

"Good-night, boys! I'm off."

Nate Stearns stepped into his boat, and pulled swiftly down the river in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AN UNSEEN ENEMY.

DICK RISDEN'S Indian had been told by his chief that he was to have an easy time when he got in the skiff and began to float down the river.

But the easy time proved to exist only in the imagination of his employer.

Auguste had so far recovered from the injuries he received in the land-slide, that he was fairly able to get about, and Ridsen did not fail to use him for all he was worth.

Grunting and grumbling availed him nothing at the start, as he was obliged to bestir himself to clear up things at the camp and load the skiff.

When they were fairly under way, and out on the then broad bosom of the Penobscot, the Indian was hardly any better off, as Ridsen had become satisfied of his ability to work, and kept him at it, greatly to his discomfort.

The detective was naturally in a great hurry to get down the river and overtake Solon Marley's party.

If the man he was seeking should have decided to return to Bangor and give himself up, and should succeed in doing so, that would cause Ridsen a loss of prestige, if not of pay.

If it was Marley's intention to go ashore at some point on the river, and to endeavor to effect his escape by a land route, that would make the task of taking him yet more difficult.

Not only would it be necessary to pursue him, but it would be no easy matter to discover the point at which he left the river.

Consequently it was of the highest importance to overtake him while he was still on the Penobscot.

To this end the detective directed his efforts with the energy that was conspicuous in everything he did.

He was not content with floating down the current, after the manner of the loggers, but used the oars vigorously, and would have contrived a sail for favoring breezes, if he had not feared that he might lose more time than he would gain by stopping to rig one up.

Besides, the wind was mostly from the southward at that season.

He not only worked, but compelled Auguste to work, and the Indian's life was not a happy one at the beginning of that cruise.

His only hope was that the speedy success of the enterprise might make matters easier, and in this hope Ridsen encouraged him.

It was astonishing to the detective that he got so little information on his way down the river.

The Penobscot was then lively with logs, all the little streams sending out their quotas to swell the general drive, and the lumbermen were floating down with them and after them in such numbers that there was no lack of human companionship on the river at that time.

He had not doubted that from the loggers he should overtake, separately or in squads, he would easily get news of the party he was pursuing, and be able to ascertain how far they were in advance of him.

Yet his chief discovery was that there was a depressing dearth of information on that subject.

The skiff and the canoe that he was seeking were conspicuous objects on the river, and could not fail to be noticed; but there were very few people who were willing to admit that they had seen them, and from those he

sometimes got contradictory or improbable statements.

He could easily imagine that Hemlock Hank was largely responsible for this scarcity of news.

The tall lumberman was so popular in that region, that scarcely any person could be met who was not his friend.

It was to be supposed that he would give such instructions to his friends as he passed them as he might deem suitable, and Ridsen had good reason to know that his instructions were generally obeyed.

But the detective succeeded in learning enough to assure him that the fugitives were ahead of him, on their way down the river, and he was convinced that if he kept straight on, without making any unnecessary stoppages, he could hardly fail to overtake them.

He met a portion of Seth Sloman's crew, with Zeb Carter at their head, as they were floating down-stream in their wangun, and applied to them for information.

It was little or nothing that he expected from that quarter, and that was just what he got.

Without making any useless pause he pushed on, blistering his hands at the oars, and compelling Auguste to take hold when he was too tired to work any longer.

He did not suffer night to stop him, and would have allowed no rest to himself or his assistant, if that had been possible.

Fortunately for the fugitives, it was not possible.

Darkness came down heavily, the sky filled with clouds, a strong wind rising, and a storm threatened.

There were many logs in the river, too, which rendered navigation dangerous in the swift current, except by daylight.

Moreover, the men were both weary, and needed rest and food.

So the skiff was securely tethered to the shore, and they built a small fire and prepared a hasty meal, which was hastily eaten.

Then, without taking time to solace themselves with a smoke, or even to prepare a comfortable bed—they were too tired for that—they laid down on the ground, and at once fell asleep.

They slept so soundly that they knew nothing of a skiff that silently slipped down the river and noiselessly landed near their camp, whose location was pointed out by the smoldering remains of their fire.

Nor did they see or hear a roughly-dressed and black-bearded man who stealthily stole along the bank to the spot where they were sleeping, and calmly inspected them both as they lay there, as if for the purpose of making sure of their identity.

He was evidently satisfied, and a scowl darkened his face when he had completed his examination.

"I could kill him easy where he is," muttered the dark man as he turned away.

"I would do it, too, if I was the wolf that he is."

If exhaustion had not made their slumber so sound, it would seem that his look of hatred must have awakened them.

Then they would have seen him steal down to the water's edge and fumble with the rope by which their boat was fastened to the shore.

Then they must have seen the skiff float away and drift down the stream, while their silent foe quietly rowed across the river, and disappeared in the darkness.

It was reserved for morning to tell them a part of the story, and the most unpleasant part.

Ridsen was awake and up by daylight, rested, but not much refreshed, by his sleep on the damp ground.

His eyes were so tightly glued together that he was obliged to go down to the river and wash his face before he could fairly get them open.

When they were open he saw something that astonished and startled him.

It would be more accurate to say that he missed seeing something.

What he missed seeing was the boat that had been tied to a tree at the shore the night before.

His cry of surprise, which was almost a howl, even brought forward Auguste, who had been lingering on his none too downy couch with the intention of remaining there as long as possible.

"The skiff is gone!" was the alarming exclamation that greeted him.

When the Indian had rubbed his eyes open, he perceived the extent of the calamity; but perhaps his grief was tempered by the reflection that he would not very soon be compelled to row.

If so, his reflections were not altogether as reasonable as they might have been.

"There is no time to talk or think about it," said Ridsen. "Somebody has been here during the night and turned our boat loose, and we must hurry down and catch it."

Auguste suggested that the fastening might have been insecure.

"Don't talk like a fool!" thundered the de-

tective, who was fairly boiling over with wrath. "When I tie a boat it is tied, and my knots never come loose without the help of human hands. Some confounded rascal has done that job to worry me, and I only wish I had him here right now. Like as not it was one of the loggers we passed up the river—cuss the skunks!"

The Indian had nothing more to offer.

"Hurry up, now, and get us a bit to eat," ordered Ridsen. "Be quick about it, while I look for the trail of the thief."

The trail, as far as it was made on the land, was not difficult to find.

Tracks, which Ridsen knew to be neither his nor Auguste's were visible on the soft ground, and he discovered the place where the bow of the marauder's skiff had touched the shores.

"It is just as I thought," said the detective, when he returned to the camp-fire. "Some scoundrel has come down the river and stolen our boat. Hurry up, Auguste! We will have to foot it, anyhow, and the sooner we start the better chance we will have of overtaking the boat."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

RIDSEN'S PLUCKY PURSUIT.

DICK RIDSEN turned to and helped the Indian, and in a very short time they had their breakfast cooked and eaten.

It would have been rank folly to start on the tramp with no food in their stomachs.

They had brought nothing ashore except a little provisions and a few utensils, and it was hard to say whether this was fortunate for them or not.

Auguste doubtless considered it at the moment a very good thing, as he would have less weight to carry.

The detective may not have regarded it so favorably, when he reflected on the possibility of losing all their property.

To find themselves "set afoot" in the woods, with no provisions or any sort of outfit, and compelled to rely upon the generosity of some party of river drivers, was by no means a pleasant prospect.

At the best it would mean the stoppage of the pursuit of Solon Marley.

But Dick Ridsen was not the man to abandon anything, or to lose any chance, so long as there was the faintest hope of "catching on."

Bottling up his wrath until he could find a suitable object to vent it upon, he pushed on tirelessly, as if his muscles were made of steel.

It was a tramp that called for that sort of a man, too.

Not a bit of a pleasant jaunt, or a healthful morning saunter along the bank of a beautiful river.

Though the Penobscot, in itself and in its surroundings, was at all times a beautiful stream, it might then be styled a tumultuous torrent, and its banks were anything but easy for casual travelers.

The river was more than booming—it was howling.

At places it ran over the bank, and spread out into the woods or over the wild meadows, rendering necessary a tiresome wade or a long detour.

At other places tributary streams came in, which, though usually of little account, were then running full and like mill-races.

Where these obstructions were not in the way, the river might be found running in a narrow pass between high and rocky banks, where a hard climb was necessary.

This sort of thing soon became too much for Auguste, whose endurance was nothing like that of his chief, and who had not yet recovered the full use of his limbs.

First he complained, then he grumbled, and finally he gave out and sat down to rest.

Ridsen left with him whatever they had to carry, with the exception of his own rifle, and directed him to come on at his leisure, but to make no more delay than was absolutely necessary.

Then the detective pushed forward again, his face pale and his lips set, but seemingly as tireless as ever.

At a narrow pass, through which the river rushed and swirled like mad, he was obliged to climb a steep and rocky ridge in order to follow its course, and at the crest of the ridge he stopped for a moment to rest and take breath.

He had the satisfaction of knowing that from this position he would have a clear and open view of the river for a considerable distance.

He looked down-stream, and saw a sight that delighted his eyes.

It was a skiff—his own skiff—floating safely and well out in the channel, with no occupant, with the oars still attached to the rowlocks, and apparently with its contents all there and uninjured.

He made his resting-spell a very brief one, nearly tumbled down the other side of the ridge, and hastened at the best of his speed along the river-bank.

Down there in the forest he was out of sight of the boat; but the remembrance of what he

had seen from the crest of the ridge spurred him up, and caused him to put all his strength into his efforts.

It was high noon by the sun when he came in sight of the skiff again.

Still it was floating well out in the channel, borne down solely by the current.

As its course was controlled by no human agency, it might reasonably have been expected to have gone ashore somewhere before he came in sight of it.

A rapidly rising river is always considerably higher in the middle than at the edges, giving it something of the appearance of a turnpike road, and all floating things necessarily have a tendency toward the shores.

But tributary streams that come in have their influence in counteracting this tendency, and there are rocks and shoals and eddies and whirlpools in the best regulated river, especially on the rise.

Whatever cause had produced the effect, the skiff had kept in the channel, and thus far it was safe.

But, when Dick Ridsen caught sight of it the second time, his sense of sight was antagonized by his sense of hearing.

The first gave him pleasure; the second filled him with pain.

As soon as his eyes rested on the boat, his ears were assailed by the roaring of a cataract.

He knew that there were rapids near at hand, and that he would not be able to overtake his lost property before it should reach them.

He dropped down on a log, rather than sat, and all the spirit seemed to depart from him.

"It's no use," he sadly muttered. "If she goes over there, that's the last of her."

He knew enough of the rapids on the river to be sure that his boat, in passing down that torrent without capable guidance must inevitably be swamped.

The loss of his boat would mean the ruinous end of his expedition—a death-blow to his enterprise.

He was a different man when he sat down on the log from the Dick Ridsen who had tramped so stalwartly down the river-bank.

Then he seemed to be exhausted, flabby, knocked down by fate, and willing to be dragged out.

Yet he was not a man to give up, even when affairs were at their worst.

He rose to his feet, and again dragged himself along, slowly and dispiritedly, but determined to "see it through."

The roaring increased as he drew nearer to the rapids, and he kept as close as he could to the water's edge, as if he wished to take a last look at his property before it was lost to him forever.

At last he saw it, and the sight sent a thrill through his frame.

The skiff had not gone over the rapids.

It was not likely to go over.

Still it was near the middle of the channel, but motionless.

Hope gave him new strength, and he hurried forward, soon perceiving that the skiff had caught against a pointed rock that jutted up out of the water at the head of the rapids, and was held there.

He soon reached a point opposite his property, and considered the situation quickly but calmly.

The rock had caught the boat about amidships, and the swift current, though boiling and swirling on either side of it, seemed to be powerless to stir it from its position.

Against the upper side the water was piling up, threatening to overturn or to fill it; but it was still there.

There was a chance to get hold of the skiff before it should be lost; but it was a very bad chance.

It would be necessary to swim to the head of the rapids in the ice-cold water, and run the risk of missing the object of his aim.

If the skiff should go over before he reached it, he could not prevent himself from following it.

If he should reach it, there would remain the serious question of navigating it down the rapids.

The task was full of danger, as well as of discomfort; but Dick Ridsen was a man of unusual nerve and strength of purpose, and he determined to undertake it.

Stripping off the heaviest portions of his clothing, including his high boots, he boldly plunged into the river.

As he struck out, the icy water chilled him to the marrow, and instantly he seemed to be reduced to a mere anatomical specimen.

His limbs, to judge by the knowledge derived from his sensations, were no bigger than knitting-needles, and yet the weight of the water appeared to be nothing, as compared with his own weight.

Strenuous exertions were required to keep him afloat and to make way in the right direction.

He had started at a considerable distance above the head of the rapids, trusting to the swift current to bear him down to the spot he desired to reach, and it did so with a vengeance.

Indeed, he was obliged to fight against it in order to strike the point he aimed at.

But he did strike it.

The skiff was still there, and he reached it.

As he seized the gunwale, and drew himself up into the boat, it started.

Only that impulse was needed to detach it from the jutting point of rock.

Seized by the current as Ridsen climbed in, it suddenly whirled around, and darted down the boiling and foaming rapids.

He snatched an oar from its rowlock, dropped into the stern, and attempted to guide the course of the craft.

It was little that he could do, if anything.

As well might a feather attempt to strive with a tornado.

He would not have known how to guide the skiff, if he had possessed the physical strength to do so, and just then he was so chilled and weakened, by his ice bath that he was scarcely capable of any exertion.

Yet he went down safely.

With the headlong rush of the torrent, among its hidden and visible rocks, over its falls, through its eddies and whirlpools, tossed and dashed and thrown and tumbled about, at times spinning around like a top, again nearly overturned, and yet again dropping as if from a height of water, the skiff remained whole and right side up, and safely reached the foot of the rapids.

As he floated out into the quiet water below, Ridsen looked back, and wondered, with all the strength of mind that was left him, how the feat had been performed.

He adjusted the oars, rowed to the shore as rapidly as possible, and made the recovered boat fast.

Then, in order to get the chill out of his flesh and bones, he exercised himself in running up to the head of the rapids and bringing down the remainder of his clothing.

Realizing the unpleasant fact that he might be compelled to wait quite a while for the slow-moving Auguste, he built a fire, dried his clothes, and made himself as comfortable as he could.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RIGHT ON THEIR HEELS.

"THAT means business," said Hemlock Hank, as he sadly looked back from the skiff at the solitary form of Dick Ridsen, standing there on the bank of the river.

Charley Creed in his canoe had ranged up at the side of the skiff.

"He was just in time to miss us," remarked the young man.

"I wish to Heaven he had been," replied Hank. "He was jest in time to see us, and that's what's the matter."

"How so? At the worst we will have a big start, and will be a long way ahead of him before he gets out into the river. I am sure that he can find no skiff at Hubbard's."

"That's a fact; but he's a quick-motioned crittur, and you know that nothin' 'll stop him. He will be on our trail sooner 'n you might suppose. He has seen us start, and now he knows jest what to do."

"So do we," suggested Mattie.

"Yes, miss; there's consolation in that, and what we've got to do is to git down the river as fast as ever we can. But it's a long road, and there's lots o' chances on the way to hender or stop us. The river is so loaded with logs, that we are liable to strike a jam most anywhere, and that would give us a tarnation set back—beggin' your pardon, miss. We must calculate, too, on that detective comin' down faster 'n we do when he gits started. He is more likely to do it than not."

"Suppose," observed Solon Marley, "that I should get off at some point along the river, and give him the slip."

"That is just what I am figurin', old man. But, if you mean a settlement, or a road that'll reach one, at this time o' year, we ain't liable to strike anythin' of that kind very soon."

"What is it, then, that you are figuring on, Hank?" inquired Charley.

"You know, my boy, that we don't mean to let the old gentleman go off alone, or only with Miss Mattie here."

"I will go with him, for one."

"So will we all, and my idea is this. If we can reach the Piscataquis afore Ridsen overhauls us—and that's what we must do—I propose that we go up that river to the head, and then we can easy work over into Moosehead Lake and the Kennebec. It will be hard polin' and paddlin' ag'inst the current, and a long journey; but we can give the detective the slip, and I guess he won't have the least idee where to look for us."

Charley Creed was highly pleased with this idea, as he would be glad to make any sort of a cruise in the company of Mattie Marley, and he expressed his approbation, but without stating the cause of his delight.

Solon Marley and his party were equally pleased, and it was evident that Hank Ward's proposition had considerably raised the spirits of the party.

They did not neglect the duty of increasing

their start and getting down the river as rapidly as possible.

Hank Ward and the Indian took turns at the oars in the skiff, and Charley Creed paddled his canoe vigorously and cheerfully, especially after he had taken Mattie in as a passenger, and easily kept up with them.

The party was in one respect at a disadvantage as regarded the pursuers.

There were more of them, and among them were a feeble elderly man and a woman.

Consequently they were obliged to spend more time ashore and in camp than two able-bodied men would be.

Hank Ward, also, caused several small bits of delay at times, which amounted to considerable in the aggregate.

The river, as he had said, was "loaded" with logs, and they occasionally met parties of men who were following and watching the logs.

Most of them were his acquaintances, and it could be said for him that he had scarcely an acquaintance who was not also a friend.

There were mutual hails, and he usually stopped to communicate with them.

This took time, but he "calculated" that the delays would prove profitable to the party, as he was careful to give such instructions to his friends as might cover or blind his trail.

Charley Creed, with Mattie Marley as his only passenger, took pleasure in paddling his canoe down the swift but placid river.

He regarded himself as her accepted suitor, and, being of a sanguine temperament, looked forward only to the time when they should reach Bangor, and she should become his wife, and everything should be nicely arranged and happily settled.

Mattie was unable to take his enthusiastic and hopeful view of the matter.

A happy termination of the cruise at Bangor was far from her thoughts.

She knew how decidedly her father was opposed to returning to that city, and that his present intention was to go anywhere but there.

In vain Charley pictured to her the future efforts of his father and himself to settle Solon Marley's affairs pleasantly and make everything serene and lovely.

She knew that she could only follow her father, and that he was bent upon putting himself out of the reach of the law rather than rushing into its toils.

Yet, though escape for him was the only end she was looking forward to, she was no less willing than Charley was to make the most of the present, and they thoroughly enjoyed the moments as they floated down the river.

Before they reached the first rapids that were to be run, Hemlock Hank compelled his young friend to resign his passenger, that she might resume her place in the skiff.

He had no idea of submitting to the delay that would be caused by stopping and laboriously carrying the boats and their contents around the rapids.

It would be much the quicker and easier job to run them, and he believed that he and Louis would be fully competent to do that work successfully.

But Solon Marley's daughter was not to be trusted with Charley, who was new to that sort of thing, as well as young and possibly not over-cautious.

It would be quite as much as he could do to manage his canoe.

The young man, however, succeeded so admirably in managing it that he received plenty of commendation.

Perhaps his good fortune was largely due to the buoyancy of his craft, which could not be overturned, and only needed to be kept clear of the rocks.

After that he was allowed to take back his passenger, and was not again deprived of her.

As for the skiff, Hemlock Hank and the Indian guided it down the first series of rapids so successfully that its other occupants scarcely experienced any alarm.

Mattie Marley was so intently watching Charley's canoe that she scarcely gave a thought to her own danger, and her father looked as if he would have no personal objection to meeting death then and there.

Hank Ward, as the commander of the expedition, kept the boats running as late in the evening as he dared, and at the night camps caused sufficient food to be cooked to last them through the day, as he would not allow any landings that were not absolutely necessary.

As everybody had to be up and away at day-break, this course of travel kept them stirring, and none of the party got any more rest than was necessary.

It was decidedly the opinion of the guide, in which the others coincided, that the detective was surely behind them, and would use his utmost efforts to overtake them.

It was more than likely, too, that his efforts might prove effectual.

One morning they started early as usual, and were in a part of the river that was broad, and where its surface was quite smooth and placid.

But before long they found themselves con-

fronted by a big drive of logs, that were quietly pursuing their way down-stream, almost filling the river, as they floated at right-angles and in all sorts of relations to each other, as if for the purpose of occupying as much space as possible.

Hemlock Hank saw danger ahead, and called to Charley Creed to bring his canoe alongside of the skiff.

"We've got to git by that fleet of logs, Charley," he said, "and we must do it purty quick, too. There's a run of rapids a little way below here."

"A bad run?" inquired the young man.

"No, not bad for us. That is, we'll find them easy enough if we git ahead of the logs. But the river is sorter shoal in places about there, and it's a darned sight more than likely that sech a lot of sticks will make a jam there."

"And that's the kind of jam that we don't want with our bread and butter."

"Hey? This is a serious matter, my boy. We must git ahead of the jam, if there's to be one, and leave the benefit of it to them that come arter us. I want you to scoot through that lot o' logs with the canoe, and be all-fired keeful that you don't git the craft smashed among 'em."

At the word Charley "scooted," and his scooting was to some purpose.

He paddled his canoe swiftly, and guided it deftly, among the scattered logs, winning from his commander various shouts of approving comment.

As for being careful, Mattie Marley was in the boat with him, and he could not have taken greater pains if the canoe had been made of glass.

Hemlock Hank and Louis put the skiff through just as swiftly and safely, and there was a general feeling of relief among them when they found themselves on the lower side of the logs.

As they approached the rapids it was easy to see, as Hank had said, that they were not at all formidable.

The water could be seen breaking over the rocks and shallow places; but there was no roaring to denote a heavy fall.

Near the upper end of the shoals, and close in to the shore, was a single man in a skiff.

He was rowing up-stream, but evidently merely keeping his boat in position there, as if waiting for somebody or something.

"I wonder what that feller is doing there," remarked Hemlock Hank.

"Look back!" excitedly shouted Charley. "You had better look up the river, and wonder who is coming there."

All looked back, and Hank stood up in the skiff to get a better view.

At the same time the stranger in the other skiff also stood up and glanced in the same direction.

What Hank Ward and his companions saw there was calculated to trouble and alarm them.

A skiff was coming down the river, above the drive of scattered logs.

It had two occupants, a white man and an Indian.

The white man was rowing, and the Indian was seated in the stern, apparently steering with a paddle, and giving directions to the other.

Dick Ridsen was distinctly recognized, and the Indian was of course Auguste.

There could be no doubt that the party below the logs had been seen by the detective.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SAVED BY A LOG JAM.

HEMLOCK HANK was so amazed by the sudden appearance of the pursuers, that for the moment he seemed to lose his usual energy and quickness of motion.

But he quickly recovered himself, and settled down to business.

"Who in thunder would ever ha' thought they'd overhaul us so quick?" he exclaimed.

"It's a darned good thing that we're on the lower side o' that timber, while they're on the upper side, and we must make the most of our chances. Foller me close, Charley, and keep the canoe right in my wake. These rapids ain't rough; but we must look out for the shallow places."

"If that jam you spoke of would form about now," said Charley, "it would be a good bit of business for us."

"Most too good to hope for. I only wish it would. Pray for it, all you that have got time to pray."

As they reached the head of the shoals, they saw the solitary stranger in the skiff row vigorously upward, as if to meet the advancing fleet of logs.

Then they darted down the rapids, and the passage required all their thoughts and exertions so that they could give no more attention to the man or men above them.

If they had been able to look in that direction they would have seen a sight which they might at least have pronounced queer.

The stranger rowed out into the middle of the channel and directly up to the logs.

He stopped at the first that came down to him, and made it fast to his skiff with a rope in the stern.

Then he rowed down the river, but at the same time toward the shore, as if he was very particular as to the direction he should give the log.

That direction proved to be one that placed the stick at a right angle to the current.

When the stranger and his skiff reached the head of the shoals, the log to which he had hitched was floating downward across the stream.

The next moment it was fast in that position, caught on two projecting rocks, and at the same time grounded.

The man in the skiff seemed to be satisfied with his work, but had not yet finished it.

He pulled his skiff up to the log by the rope, cast off that attachment, and guided his frail craft down the rapids like one "to the manner born."

He had laid a sure foundation for a jam at that point.

Quite possibly the logs might have formed a jam there of their own accord; but he had put the matter beyond question.

The next log that came down caught on that which lay across the channel, and hung there.

Another came, caught, and swung across the stream.

Then they came in troops and huddles, and all stuck.

In a very short time there was an extensive and solid jam of logs in the river, reaching upward quite a distance from the head of the shoals, and across from shore to shore.

The skiff which Hank Ward directed, together with the canoe that followed it, had swiftly and safely reached the foot of the rapids, and he had been able to see a portion of the performance up the river.

A subdued exclamation gave token of the wonder with which he regarded it; but he had no time to stop to make inquiries, or even to comment on that very strange occurrence.

The jam had stopped Dick Ridsen; but Dick Ridsen would not stay stopped.

He would make a portage with as little delay as possible, and would soon be again in pursuit of his prey.

Therefore it was of great importance to the fugitives that their boats should still be urged forward as rapidly as possible.

Fully realizing the value of speed, Hank Ward settled down to his oars as soon as the skiff reached safe water, and rowed with all the vigor that was in him.

Charley Creed in the canoe was obliged to ply his paddles like a steam engine to keep up.

As Hank sat and pulled, with his face up the river, he saw the stranger descend the rapids and row down-stream.

He came on so swiftly that it was evident that he wished to overtake or communicate with the party in advance.

But they could not stop for anything of that sort, as all their energies must be used for the purpose of getting down the river and reaching the mouth of the Piscataquis before the detective could get to them.

The stranger did not need to ask them to stop for him.

He had a light skiff, and was such a stalwart and skillful oarsman, that he rapidly overhauled them.

They had not got out of sight of the rapids and the jam, when he passed Charley Creed's canoe without speaking, and ranged up at the side of the skiff.

Charley noticed as he went by that he was a stout, bullet-headed man, coarsely dressed, with a dark face and abundant black hair and beard.

As he drew alongside of the skiff, he was greeted with a cry of recognition from Hemlock Hank.

"Hello, Nate Stearns! Is it really you? Where on airth did you come from?"

"Never mind that jest now, Hank. I've got somethin' else to speak about."

"All right, my lad. Fire ahead. You must excuse me for not stoppin' as I've got business that takes me down the river in a hurry."

"I understand that. Mr. Marley, do you remember me?"

The old gentleman had been looking at the stranger closely.

"Yes, I remember you," he answered. "You are Nathan Stearns, the man who—"

"Yes, sir—that man. You were very kind to me once, Mr. Marley—the only friend I seemed to have in the world—and I bain't forgot it. I know what sort of a trouble you are in here—I met Zeb Carter up the river, Hank, and he told me all about it—and I am doin' what I can, sir, to help you out, in remembrance of what you did for me."

"Darned if we don't need that kind o' help jest now," remarked Hank.

"More than I had hoped you would. I turned that man's skiff loose a while ago, to let it go over the rapids; but it didn't make the riffle, and he caught it. That kept him back more'n a little, but not enough. Jest now I started a jam at the head of the shoals yonder, and I guess it's a solid one."

Charley Creed had brought his canoe within easy hearing distance, and the conversation did

not prevent the three boats from being propelled down the stream at a rapid rate.

"I thought I saw you doin' somethin' of that kind," said Hank, "and I wondered what it was. It's a tarnation good thing for us."

"I hope so. It will bother the boys some when they git down; but it will be no more than they'd expect, and it will be easy to cut away the key-log and let the jam loose. I hope it will bother the man up there—that is all I care about."

"Of course it will bother him, Nate, and it will give us a good start ag'in; but it's astonishin' what a ripper he is to go, and what a deadly grip he's got for holdin' on. Things look kinder blue for us."

"He has amazed me," said Stearns. "I don't see what is to hinder him from overhaulin' you—unless—"

"Unless nothin'," sharply cried Hank. "I know the grudge you've got ag'in that man, Nate Stearns, and I can see what is workin' into your mind. None o' that, my lad! None o' that, I say! Be peaceable, whatever happens."

"I'll try to; but what will you do?"

"My aim is, Nate, to give that feller the slip by turnin' up the Piscataquis. We ain't fur from there now, and if we can make the turn afore he comes in sight, I guess we'll be tol'able safe."

"I understand you, Hank. I mean to drop behind you, and if I can hinder that Ridsen in any peaceable way, you can depend on me to do it."

"Good luck to you, my lad!"

"God bless you, Stearns!" said Solon Marley. "But I beg you to be careful, and not get into any danger or trouble."

"All right, sir."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BAFFLED, BUT NOT BEATEN.

WEAK and exhausted as Dick Ridsen was after his hard tramp, and his icy bath, he was in no humor for waiting for Auguste, and the delay caused by his follower angered him so much that it really made him warm.

But poor Auguste did not deserve severe blame.

His physical condition was about as bad as that of his chief, and he did not possess the detective's nerve and mental vigor, or the incentive that urged him to action almost beyond endurance.

When the Indian finally got down to the skiff, he expressed his satisfaction at its recovery, and was disposed to rest and take things easy.

But Ridsen would not let him rest.

If he wanted to sleep, he must get his sleep in the boat on the river.

The more Ridsen was baffled and delayed and disappointed, the more set he became in his purpose of overtaking the fugitives, and making a successful end of his enterprise.

He bundled Auguste into the boat, and took the oars, and again the skiff slid swiftly down the stream.

There was to be no more loafing, no more rest, no stopping even for cooking food.

If they could not eat such provisions as they had without the delay of cooking, they must go hungry.

The probable and possible hindrances of log-jams in the river, and disasters in the rapids, would be quite enough to overcome, without losing any time that could be saved.

No time was lost.

Ridsen rowed until he could no longer lift an oar, and then compelled the Indian to take his turn, relieving him after a brief rest.

He took pity on the wearied muscles and nerves of his follower, but had no compassion for his own.

This continuous and exhausting labor had the effect of sending them down the river at a very rapid rate—a rate that conquered space while it used up the conquerors—and he soon had before his eyes a grand reward for his tireless exertions.

The fugitives were in sight.

The first view of the flying squadron was not caught by himself, but by Auguste.

Ridsen was seated at the oars, with his face turned up the river, and on it the same set, determined expression that he had carried from the beginning of the cruise.

His only audible indication of feeling was an occasional growl or muttered exclamation as he was compelled to clear the skiff from the logs that were thickly scattered over the surface of the river.

Finally they annoyed him so much that he ceased rowing, and looked about to see how he could best make his way through the floating mass.

"This is a great nuisance," he said. "I am afraid that we will come to a log jam before long, and that will worry us no little. Of course the other boats are well below this muss, and they have the best of it, confound them!"

"Dere dem!" shouted Auguste.

"Dem what, you mutton-head?"

"Long Hank an' dem."

Ridsen jumped up, and looked down the river.

There they were—the two boats—the skiff and the canoe—well below the big drive of logs, and making their way rapidly down-stream.

He recognized Hemlock Hank in the skiff, and saw the old man and the girl.

Of course he was seen by them, and they would increase their efforts to escape.

There was no time to be lost.

Instant and determined action was required.

"We've got 'em now, Auguste," said the detective, but with a shade of doubt in his tone—"that is, if we can go through these infernal logs."

He settled down to his oars, and pulled into the mass as if regardless of consequences.

But another cry from the Indian made him pause.

"Stop!" yelled Auguste. "Nodder man dere. Jam heap quick now."

Ridsen rose and looked over the logs.

What he saw there forced from his lips such language as shocked even Auguste.

A black-bearded man in a skiff had attached one of the foremost logs to his boat, and was towing it so that it would swing across the current.

The detective's quick perception at once fastened on the motive of this act.

He also recognized the man who was doing it, and easily connected the man with the motive.

"Curse the scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "It is that State-prison bird, Nate Stearns. I am sure that it was he who turned our skiff loose, and now he is trying to block the river against us. Auguste, is there no way to get by these wretched logs?"

There was no way.

The jam was formed instantly, and it grew and spread so rapidly that in a very brief space of time it reached from shore to shore and far up the river.

All the exertions of the detective and his assistant were needed to keep their boat clear of the logs as they came down with the current and joined the jam.

He was forced to row upward against the stream, while Auguste busied himself in fending off the great sticks of timber that shot forward, and swung and whirled about, threatening at every moment to smash the skiff.

"It is a penitentiary offense," wrathfully muttered Ridsen. "It is assault with intent to commit murder. If I ever get that scamp in my clutches, I will cage him again."

He finally got the boat up the river, out of the way of the jam and its constant accretions, and rowed to the shore.

It was the only thing to do.

There was a solid jam of logs, that blocked the river completely, and could be depended upon not to stir of its own accord.

No lumbermen were near to attempt to start it, and, when they should come, some time might elapse before the barrier could be removed.

The only chance to get down the river with the least possible delay was to go ashore and carry the skiff and its contents around the jam.

Ridsen instantly perceived this fact, and acted upon his perception of the situation.

The skiff was hauled up on the shore, and the tedious, wearing labor of the portage was immediately begun, in spite of the groaning and grumbling of Auguste, and in spite of the weak and weary condition of both the men.

They made the portage at the expense of toil and suffering that unfitted them for any further exertion.

Night had closed in upon the river when the task was finished; but that would not have hindered them if they had been able to go forward.

Each was so completely exhausted by continual labor, together with lack of rest and proper food, that they were absolutely compelled to stop where they were.

They forced themselves to build a fire and cook some supper, because they were in desperate need of sustenance, though doubtless either of them would have preferred to drop down and rest without it.

Too sleepy to enjoy the luxury of a smoke, they yielded to fatigue, and dropped on the ground, with no other couch than the blankets they wrapped around them.

Almost instantly they were asleep.

So sound was their slumber that again they had no knowledge of the secret enemy who crept upon them.

The same man who had stolen their skiff and blocked the river against them.

The man who hated Dick Ridsen, and whom the detective was aching to get into his clutches.

He silently came up the river in his skiff, near the shore, guided by their fire, and landed a little way below their camp.

Stealthily he crept toward them, but came forward fearlessly when he saw how well and soundly they were sleeping.

He had searched the shore as he approached, but had not seen their boat in the water.

It was probably his intention to make a sure thing of his work, this time and to put their means of locomotion quite out of their reach.

If so, he was deeply disappointed. They had hauled the skiff up on the shore, and it was turned over there, with the oars and most of their property under it. On one side of the boat lay Dick Ridsen, and on the other the Indian. Both were sleeping; but an attempt to remove their skiff or anything that was theirs would instantly awaken them. "No use," muttered Nate Stearns, as he quietly walked away.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. A NIGHT SURPRISE.

THE fugitives, in the mean time, did not allow their course to be arrested by night or fatigue.

Darkness was not to be dreaded, as they were then in a part of the river where there were no rapids and scarcely any logs.

They were not weary from incessant exertion, as Dick Ridsen was; but they perceived the necessity of wearying themselves.

The detective had stolen upon them unawares, when they would not have suspected him of being so near, and their narrow escape from being overtaken had aroused in them a sense of constant peril.

It was possible that Nate Stearns, who had already rendered them such essential service, would be able to further delay the progress of Ridsen; but that was not to be depended on.

They must rely on their own exertions, and must make a resolute and continued effort to reach the Piscataquis before they could be overhauled.

Work was the order of the day and of the night.

All the sleep they had they were obliged to get as they could in the boats, Hank Ward and Louis taking turns at the oars in the skiff, and Mattie Marley plying the paddle in the canoe while her lover indulged in a snooze.

They were all considerably jaded when the morning broke, and looked, as well as felt, much the worse for wear.

Gladly would they have gone ashore and cooked a warm meal to revive and strengthen them.

But Hemlock Hank would allow no stoppage. He insisted upon keeping them to their work until he could feel reasonably sure that they were safe from pursuit, and that would not be until they were out of the Penobscot.

So they hastened forward, and it was at least some reward for their toil to see how swiftly they sped down the stream while they had a clear stretch of water and made the most of it.

But their pursuers would have the same stretch, and might be expected to make equally good time.

It was near noon when Hank uttered a joyful cry, and communicated to his companions the pleasing intelligence that they were near the Piscataquis.

He stood up in the skiff, and looked anxiously up the river, and down and across it; but no person was in sight.

Then he settled down to his oars again, and pulled around into the mouth of the tributary stream, closely followed by the canoe.

A feeling of relief, if not of actual elation, pervaded the party when they were fairly out of the Penobscot and steering up the Piscataquis.

As far as the labor of the cruise was concerned, their position was decidedly changed for the worse.

The tributary river, like all the rest of the streams in that region, was at flood height, and it was anything but an easy task to stem its swift current.

But they surely might consider themselves safe from their pursuers, who could not be expected to follow them from the Penobscot into the smaller river, simply because of ignorance of the fact that they had gone up there.

The toil of working against the strong current had quite overcome them when night fell; but they had then got beyond a big bend of the river, and believed that they were quite secure in stopping there and passing the night.

So they pulled up the boats, built a fire, and proceeded to make themselves comfortable.

It was no small pleasure to feel their feet on the ground again, and to be able to move about as they chose.

But what did them the most good was the feeling of safety, of freedom from a harassing and perilous pursuit.

A good supper was the first thing in order, and they put forth their utmost efforts to do the best in that line that their resources allowed.

No effort at all was required to eat it.

In fact, their hunger would have made them consider a far poorer repast delicious.

After the meal the men lighted their pipes, and all sat on the bank of the river in the light of the fire, and conversed freely as they enjoyed the new sensations consequent upon safety and supper.

It was admitted that a journey up the Piscataquis and around into the Kennebec would be a very long and laborious one, besides being

attended by the possible inconvenience of falling short of provisions and other necessities.

But the party took various views of the coming cruise.

Solon Marley was satisfied with getting away from his pursuer, and only wished, whatever might happen, to keep himself clear of the grasp of the law.

Mattie was intent upon accompanying her father wherever he went, and was easily contented while she could enjoy the society of her lover.

Louis had become attached to the old man, and still more so to his daughter, and had no thought but to follow them.

Charley Creed was delighted with the idea of a cruise, though ever so long and hard, with Mattie Marley in his canoe; but would doubtless have preferred the quicker trip to Bangor and a speedier marriage.

Hemlock Hank, who knew more about the matter than any of them, had no sort of a fancy for the stretching out of the journey.

His idea was that they would stop and rest after exploring the Piscataquis for a short distance, and would return to the Penobscot when it was probable that Ridsen had abandoned the search and gone on to Bangor.

But he did not press this scheme at the time, as it was evident at his first hint that it would be stubbornly opposed by Solon Marley.

Amid their varying ideas there was one point upon which they all agreed—that the detective would not be likely to follow them up the Piscataquis.

"He can't do it," insisted Hank. "How would he ever think of seeing a thing? He will follow us down-stream until he gets the notion into his head that he has lost us; but he can't begin to guess where or how he lost us. For all he knows, we're as like to be below as above him, and he wouldn't have nothin' to go on in makin' a fresh start. No, I don't see any cause to worry about Dick Ridsen now."

The sound of oars in the river below them suddenly cast a wet blanket over this confident declaration.

They looked at each other in silent and horrified amazement.

Rapidly nearer came the sound of the oars, proving that the boat to which they were attached was being propelled up the stream by a powerful pair of arms at a good rate of speed.

Solon Marley started up.

"Tain't no use to run," said Hemlock Hank, restraining him. "We couldn't get ahead of that craft, do our best, and we'll have to stand and take what comes—or settle it somehow."

Swiftly the boat came in sight, and with it came a friendly hail over the water.

"Hello, Hank!"

"That's no Ridsen!" joyfully cried the tall lumberman. "All right, friends; it's Nate Stearns!"

Shortly the skiff was landed, and their black-bearded friend sprang up the bank to greet them.

He was warmly welcomed, and Mattie and Louis bestirred themselves to prepare supper for him, while the others eagerly besought him for news.

"That man is a long way behind," he said. "The jam and the portage knocked him up, I guess, and he had to stop and take a night's rest. I saw him and his Injun sound asleep at their camp, and meant to make an end of their skiff; but they had it so well guarded that I couldn't touch it. Then I hurried down-stream, and turned up here because you said that you would take to the Piscataquis."

Nate Stearns camped with his friends that night, and in the morning told them that he would loiter along below, to watch the river in case Ridsen should possibly follow the fugitives.

So they left him behind, with many thanks for his kind deeds and intentions, and pursued their course up the stream.

They did not by any means make rapid time, as they considered themselves safe, and the labor of working against the current was very severe, and the leader was not anxious to get far up the river, and why should they hurry?

They did not hurry, but went on so slowly and easily that when night fell they were but a few miles from their camp of the previous night.

After supper Hemlock Hank, though he did not betray any real uneasiness, said that he thought it best to try to make sure that they were entirely safe.

For that purpose, as he was well rested, he would scout down through the woods to the mouth of the Piscataquis, to see if he could discover any signs of the presence of the detective.

So he slipped away in the darkness, leaving behind him a slight feeling of doubt and uncertainty.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"YOU ARE MY PRISONER."

"SOMEBODY has been here!" were the first words uttered by Dick Ridsen when he arose in the morning from his hard bed at the side of the skiff, stretched himself, and looked around.

A stranger had been there in the night—no doubt of that—the prints of his heavy boots could easily be seen on the soft ground.

"It is the same fellow who bothered us before, Auguste," said the detective. "The scoundrel who turned our boat loose and blocked up the river. I suppose he meant to do some more damage; but we were too well guarded. Oh, don't I wish that I could get my claws on him!"

Both men had been so far refreshed by their night's rest that they hastened to cook some food and make an early start.

Ridsen was so active and eager that he infused a portion of his spirit into the Indian, who put more energy into his work than he had shown since the cruise began.

In a very short time they were again afloat and rowing rapidly down the freshet-laden river.

They found the stream quite clear of logs, those that had not already passed being held back by the jam they had left behind them.

With no obstructions of any kind to annoy them, Ridsen was confident of their ability to overtake the fugitives.

Though the boats below had as good a chance as they had, and probably had made a night-run while they were sleeping, it was remembered that they had been all but overhauled up the river, and why should the same feat not be performed again?

As they were then tolerably fresh, and the others doubtless tired, the odds were largely in favor of its performance.

They slipped swiftly down the stream until they reached the mouth of the Piscataquis, into which the detective gazed wistfully, as if aware of the fact that it formed an opening for a hard-pressed party to slip away.

The swift current of the tributary stream was bearing them further out into the Penobscot, when a word from the Indian in the stern caused his chief to pause.

Auguste took from the water something that he held up to the light.

It was a ribbon—a pink ribbon—that had evidently been used—doubtless detached from some portion of feminine apparel.

Ridsen's quick wits carried him swiftly to conclusions.

"It came out of that river!" he exclaimed. "No doubt in the world of that. Its current brought the thing out to us. There is a woman up there, Auguste, and what woman can it be but one?"

The Indian shook his head, and looked stolid and stupid.

Possibly an internal objection to ascending the Piscataquis increased his stock of ignorance.

"There is a woman up there," repeated the detective, "and it is not the least bit likely that it is any other woman than the one with the party we are following. Auguste, they have given me the slip, and have gone up that river to try to hide from me. But they have run themselves into a trap, and I am sure to get them now."

This idea came to him like a revelation, and he acted upon it immediately.

But he had hardly got into the strong current of the Piscataquis when he hesitated.

"I don't know," he muttered. "There's no sure thing on this, and I could easily overhaul them if they have gone down-stream. But they must know that, and it would make them turn aside. Well, I will chance it."

Pulling up-stream against a swift current was the hardest of hard work.

Ridsen soon had enough of it, and was compelled to resign the oars to Auguste, who also became weary, and much sooner than his chief.

He proposed that they should land and cut some setting-poles, as they could get on faster up-stream by poling, and the work would be easier.

Ridsen assented, and they cut and trimmed a couple of fairly handy poles, though the sap that was in them made them heavier than they should have been.

After that they rowed or poled as seemed most advantageous, and went up the stream at a pretty rapid rate.

The setting-poles at least enabled them to rest, in the Yankee fashion, by "changing work."

Darkness was coming on as they were poling, when the quick-sighted Auguste perceived a light ahead, to which he called the attention of his chief.

It seemed to be a camp-fire, or the remains of one.

"There they are!" said Ridsen, in an excited whisper. "We have got them now, and I will defy them to escape. It is lucky that we came up this river, and how thankful I am to the young woman who lost her ribbon!"

He landed the skiff at a safe distance below the light, and stepped ashore, directing the Indian to stay there and wait for him.

Auguste was glad enough to obey, as he had no wish to get into any kind of a scrape, and the detective went on alone, carrying his rifle and revolver.

Stealthily he made his way along the river bank, and cautiously approached the dying camp fire.

He looked at the river, and saw only a skiff fastened there.

This surprised him, and his surprise was increased when he got closer to the fire.

Then he perceived that there was no tent and that there was but one man in the camp.

That man, who was lying down near the fire, started up suddenly, and the detective at once recognized him.

It was Nate Stearns.

The anger that Ridsen had been nursing flamed up instantly, and took entire possession of him.

The man who had so bothered and delayed him, and twice put him in peril of his life—the man he had so eagerly desired to get in his clutches—was there before him, and the hour of retribution had arrived.

"I have caught you, you black-faced scoundrel!" he exclaimed. "It was you who turned my skiff loose, and started a jam in the river to stop me, and last night you stole up to my camp to work some more of your deviltry. I've caught you now!"

"What do you want?" hotly demanded Stearns.

"I mean to whip you within an inch of your life, you sneaking jail-bird!"

"With what? Your rifle?"

"No. I don't want to kill you, though you deserve it."

The detective stood his rifle against a tree.

"With your pistol, then?" sneered Stearns, as his foe advanced. "You are mean enough to do it, as you see that I've no weapon."

Dick Ridsen threw his revolver on the ground.

The black-bearded man saw his chance, snatched a knife from his belt, and dashed at his adversary.

Ridsen drew a knife as quickly, and met the attack.

As blade clashed against blade, his faithless steel broke short off, and he was unarmed.

He seized his opponent's right hand with his left, and they clinched in a desperate struggle.

The two men were so nearly matched, in spite of the knife that Stearns still held, that it was likely that the issue of the combat would be decided by chance.

Cuance did decide it, or at least made a sudden and complete change in its nature.

They were near the edge of the bank when they clinched, and their struggles brought them closer to it.

Already soft with the moisture of spring, and weakened by the sapping of the current below, it gave way beneath them, and they were plunged into the stream.

They fell together, clinched as they had stood, and the swift current closed over them and bore them away.

Once only did their two heads and part of their bodies appear above the surface.

They were struggling violently; but whether they were striving against each other, or against their mutual enemy, the stream, it would have been impossible for an observer to decide.

Auguste, seated alone in the skiff, and wearied by the day's hard work, had dropped into a doze, when he was aroused by a splash in the water.

He started up, looked over the edge of the boat, and saw a head rise above the surface of the stream.

It bobbed under before he got his wits at work; but a hand was raised in its place.

Recovering his senses, the Indian grabbed at the hand before it was swept away by the current, caught it, and drew it toward him, bringing the head above water again.

The head was that of Dick Ridsen, whose entire body was there.

Was he alive, or dead?

Auguste took a firm hold of his coat-collar, and endeavored to drag him up into the skiff.

The task was not an easy one for him, but was successfully accomplished, and the detective lay in the bottom of the boat, drenched, limp, and speechless.

But before the Indian could get about any measures for his relief, his breath came back to him.

He had lost consciousness and another minute in the water would have made an end of him.

Shortly he revived sufficiently to sit up and call for liquor, which was given him, and there was no longer the least reason for supposing him to be a dead man.

Indeed, except for the effects of his immersion in the icy stream, he seemed to be scarcely the worse for his deadly encounter with Nate Stearns.

He hastened to take off his clothing and wring out the water, piece by piece.

"You find 'um, Missa Ridsen?" inquired the Indian.

"I didn't find them; but I found him."

"What him?"

"Nate Stearns—the scoundrel who stole our boat and made more trouble."

"Where him now?"

The detective pointed significantly at the river.

When Auguste had taken in the full meaning of the gesture, he mildly suggested that they should camp for the night.

"No!" thundered Ridsen. "We must go on, and be quick about it. The ribbon we found never came from that jail-bird. The woman is above us somewhere, and her party is not far off. We must push on and catch them. Give me the oars, Auguste! I must work like a mule just now, to keep off a chill."

He did work like a mule, until his tired muscles could no longer bear the strain.

While the body of Nate Stearns was carried down by the current, rolled in the mud, and rubbing against rocks and logs and freshet debris, his living enemy was wearily working his way up the stream, with his recovered rifle and revolver within reach.

Though he worked hard, and got as much labor as was possible out of Auguste, their progress against the swift and surging current was necessarily slow.

It was not until near morning that they came in view of a faint light that indicated another camp.

Ridsen was jubilant, and the sight put new vigor into his wearied frame.

"Now I've got them!" he ejaculated between his set teeth. "It's a sure thing this time. I knew that scamp was not up here for nothing."

Again the skiff was silently poled to the shore and fastened there.

Again the detective directed Auguste to stay there and wait for him, and again the Indian gladly obeyed the order.

Dick Ridsen, armed only with his revolver, moved forward to effect the capture of the camp, stealing quietly through the forest that lined the bank of the river, as he had done when he moved upon the camp of the solitary man below.

The faint light of coming dawn was making itself seen in the sky as he drew near the fire that had been suffered to smolder.

He looked at the river, and the sight of a skiff and a canoe there convinced him that he had struck the right camp.

Two tents were pitched there—one of them a rubber shelter-tent; and the other apparently of home manufacture.

Yes, it was surely the camp of the party he had been pursuing.

No person was visible as yet, and the detective stationed himself behind a tree, to watch for signs of life, and to meditate upon what he should do next.

He did not wish to surprise them too roughly, as a sudden awakening might give them an excuse to attack him.

At the same time he was determined that his prey should not escape.

As the morning changed from dun to gray, an elderly man stepped forth from one of the tents, rubbed his eyes, and looked up at the sky.

Ridsen shrunk back behind the tree.

It was Solon Marley—the man he wanted.

Solon Marley hesitated a moment, and walked forward under the pines and in the direction of the river.

As he slowly passed near the tree behind which Ridsen was stationed, the detective quietly stepped up behind him, and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"You are my prisoner!" he said, as he faced the old man.

CHAPTER XL.

"YOUR TEETH ARE DRAWN."

ALTHOUGH Hemlock Hank left an uneasy feeling in the minds of his friends when he went on a scout down the river, they had no real cause for alarm.

No more, at least, than they had previous to his departure.

They talked it over as they sat by the fire and smoked, and came to the conclusion that they had no need to worry.

So accustomed were they to relying upon Hank's experience and sagacity and prowess, that the temporary withdrawal of his protecting presence had upset them.

That was what Charley Creed said, and he freely declared that it would be better for them, instead of behaving like a lot of babies, to go to sleep and thus await the return of their friend.

At nine o'clock by Charley Creed's watch he had not returned; but he had not been expected back so soon.

Nine o'clock was late bedtime for them, and they all turned in, Charley and the Indian under the shelter-tent, and Solon Marley and his daughter under the other.

That is to say, Solon Marley stayed out nearly an hour later than the rest.

He made no attempt to conceal his uneasiness, which kept him awake, and twice in the night he was up and out to see if Hank had arrived.

Early in the morning, before it was daylight, and before any of the others were awake, he was stirring again, just in time to fall into the clutches of his relentless pursuer.

This time it was the early bird that got caught.

Charley Creed and Louis, snoozing sweetly under their tent, were aroused by an agonized cry for help.

They jumped up and ran out, Charley grabbing his pistol belt that lay beside him.

Mattie was startled by the same cry, and rushed forth wildly.

By the gray light of dawn they saw Solon Marley standing and struggling with a man in whose grasp he was no better than a child.

The old man seemed to be frenzied by fear and excitement.

"Let that man go!" shouted Charley as he ran up. "What do you mean by this assault?"

He drew his pistol from the sheath, and threw away the belt.

But Dick Ridsen, quite as quickly, covered him with a cocked revolver.

"It means," said the detective, "that I am an officer of the law. I hold a warrant for the arrest of this man, Solon Marley, and I have found him here. He is my prisoner."

Mattie Marley ran up, and clasped her father in her arms as if she would never let him go.

Then Ridsen released his grasp.

"All right, young lady," said he. "No danger of his getting away while you hold him."

Charley Creed recognized the detective as the man he had seen standing on the bank of the Penobscot when they began their voyage down that river, and he acknowledged the power that was behind him, if not in him.

But Charley was inclined to resist.

"You shall not take him!" he shouted.

"I will!" firmly replied the detective. "I believe, young gentleman, that you are the son of Anson Creed, of Bangor. Your father was always a law-abiding man, and you had better follow in his footsteps. There are two of you here against one, and I suppose there is another somewhere about; but I warn you not to make any attempt to resist my authority. I am an officer of the law, as I told you, and I represent the State of Maine. It will go hard with you if you fight the State of Maine."

Solon Marley had edged toward his young friend while the detective was speaking, as if desirous of being protected.

But that was not his intention.

Suddenly he snatched Charley's pistol from his hand, and pointed it at his own head.

It was Mattie who struck up the weapon, and the next instant Ridsen wrenched it from the old man's feeble grasp.

Solon Marley burst into tears.

"Kill me!" he entreated. "Shoot me, or let me shoot myself! I can never bear to be taken to Bangor as a prisoner."

"You shall not be!" wildly declared Charley, who was deeply moved by the old man's misery.

But what could he do to prevent it?

The law was against him, and he was then unarmed.

Oh, if Hemlock Hank would come!

He did come!

"Hold on there! Take it easy!"

It was the voice of Hank Ward, cheery, strong and confident, inspiring his friends with fresh hope and courage.

Of course he had recognized Ridsen in the growing daylight, and had "sized up" the situation as he came into view.

Greatly to the surprise of his friends, if not of the detective, there were two men with him.

One was evidently a city man, though attired for travel in the wilderness, and he looked a little out of place there.

The other—a rough, horny-handed six-footer—was as clearly a man accustomed to the woods and the river.

Each carried a rifle, and Hemlock Hank was similarly equipped.

The odds were heavily against the detective—provided that all the others should array themselves against him.

He recognized the changed state of affairs by standing on his guard, with a revolver in each hand.

Hank strode direct to Solon Marley, and took him by the hand.

"Don't be worried, old friend," he said. "Nobody shall harm you, or take you where you don't want to go."

This sounded like a defiance, and as such it was accepted by the detective.

"I give you all notice," he shouted, "that I am an officer of the law, and that I hold this man under a warrant for his arrest. If any person attempts to interfere with me, he will do so at his personal peril."

"Oh, go easy," said Hank. "Don't set in to try to raise a row when everythin's quiet and serene. You mean well, Dick Ridsen, and you were all right a bit ago; but 'tain't no use now. Your teeth are drawn."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Ridsen, considerably taken aback.

"I mean that your warrant ain't wu'th a straw, and that Solon Marley is as free as he is innocent. This gentleman—lawyer Drill, of Bangor—will tell you all about it; but I first want to explain to my friends here how I happened to 'light onto him."

The explanation was simply given, and with reasonable briefness.

Hank had struck through the forest until he had reached the Penobscot, where he found a camp on the bank.

Supposing that he had come across Ridsen and his companion, he carefully reconnoitered the camp, and learned that it was quite a different party which he had discovered.

He joined them, and they proved to be Mr. Brill, a lawyer of Bangor, and a woodman named Gregory, who had been employed by that gentleman to guide him into the wilderness.

His purpose there, as he freely informed Hank, was to find a man named Solon Marley, who was supposed to be somewhere in that region.

If he should fail to find Mr. Marley, he wanted to come across Dick Ridsen, a Boston detective, who had been sent northward on a similar errand.

These statements made Hank somewhat skittish, and he cautiously inquired into the lawyer's real motive.

Being satisfied on that point, he welcomed the strangers, and informed them that their serach was about at an end.

Gregory assured him positively that they had not met any skiff going down the river, and this renewed Hank's suspicion that Ridsen might have followed them up the Piscataquis.

As Mr. Brill's information would be of great importance, especially in that event, Hank easily persuaded the lawyer and his guide to accompany him back to the camp where he had left Solon Marley.

"He said that he wanted to find either Solon Marley or Dick Ridsen," concluded the tall lumberman. "By good luck he has found you both here."

"What do you want, Mr. Brill?" demanded the detective. "If you have another warrant, you must remember that I have arrested and hold this man."

"I have no warrant, and yours is dead," replied the lawyer. "So is Stephen Ralston, the man who employed you. Just before he died he confessed that he was the author of the forgeries of which Solon Marley has been accused. The trouble was caused, Mr. Marley, by the death of an uncle of yours in Ohio, who left a large estate to you and your sister. Your brother-in-law persecuted you for the sake of cheating you out of your share of that property; but death put a stop to his plans. The indictments have been nulled, and I have been sent to find you and bring you home."

Congratulations were in order, and right hearty they were.

The detective joined in them, though he sadly wondered where he was then to get his pay for his long and laborious search.

"Stephen Ralston's estate is good for it," answered Mr. Brill.

"Anyhow, I succeeded. I have never scored a failure yet."

The journey down the river was safely and swiftly accomplished, without any exciting event.

Solon Marley was warmly welcomed back to his old home, and Charley and Mattie were happy, and Hemlock Hank was largely a partaker in the general joy.

THE END.

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